

BY ARIZONA CY.

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A-STRADDLE OF THE BEAST WAS SOMETHING THAT LOOKED LIKE A CROSS BETWEEN A TENDERFOOT YAHOO AND A HOWLIN' IJIT.

You-Bet Bob's Circus;

OR,

High Old Times at Hold-Up.

BY ARIZONA CY

CHAPTER I.

HELD UP AT HOLD-UP.

I WAS there, you bet; so was my pard. We don't miss much that's goin' on within a hundred miles of our home base. You-bet Bob is a team all in himself, and we are pards. Where he goes, there I go too. Bob is wide open for fun seven days in the week, and if I want fun all I have to do is to tie to Bob and I have it.

One day You-bet Bob came to me and he said, said he:

"Cy, thar is goin' to be a big doin's over to Hold-up."

"So?" said I.

"Shur," said he.

"What is it like?" I asked him.

"Wull, ye know et is Thanksgivin', for one thing," he answered, "and for another thing they are goin' to make it the red-hottest old Thanksgivin' you ever heard tell of in your born days!"

"Sho!" said I.

"Shur pop!" said he.

"And you are a-goin', Bob?"

"You bet!" said Bob, promptly.

"Ef you go, then I go too," I chipped in.

That settled it; it was just as much a bargain as if we had had it drawn up in writin' and a seal and ribbons saddled onto et. We slicked up our ponies, brightened up our guns a bit, and next mornin' we put on our store clothes and ambled off in the direction of Hold-up.

I won't say much about myself, but I must chip in once, for Bob before I go any further along this literary trail. Bob is a high boss, I'm telling you; he is almost a boss and a wagon to boot, when he gits up on his hind legs, as he does once in awhile. He is about thirty, ruther slick in 'pearance, and as full of frolic as a broncho is full of bucks.

Well, we got to Hold-up, or within sight of the camp, when of a sudden a chap lights out into the trail right in front of our ponies, with both his guns to the fore, and he chimes right out merrily.

"Whoop! Hold your hosses, pilgrims! This hyer is the place whar you have to pay toll."

"Pay toll?" I asks.

"That's right," said he.

"That's dead wrong!" said Bob.

"Right or wrong, hyer is whar you pay," declared the feller that blocked our trail, "and the best thing you kin do is to put up your hands till I go through ye," he said in finish. And there we were, you bet.

Bob looked at me and I looked at Bob as we put up our hands, for that feller's guns was dead on us, with the open ends our way and I had a sort of creepy feelin' all over in places, while even Bob looked spotted here and there, some of which spots was "mad" and some of which was "scare."

"What's goin' to be done?" asked Bob.

"Blame me ef I know," said I.

"We're poorer than Job's turkey," said Bob to the feller.

"And poorer, too," I chipped in to help it along. "We ain't worth botherin' with."

"No matter how poor ye are," said the feller, "you will make me richer, so go down and take account of stock, and do it quick." An' he took a closer squint along his guns.

He had a paper bag over his head, with holes popped in it for his eyes, and with his hat settin' on top of that he looked like the very Nick himself. My hands went in the

directions of my pockets instanter, for I didn't want to take any chances, but he yelled:

"Up with them hands! Don't you dare to reach, or I'll bore ye so quick ye won't know what hurt ye! That's what I'm hyer for, pilgrims, and you will find that I am no tenderfoot at this sort of thing. Now, then, what are you goin' to do about it? Will you hand out your wealth? or must I make meat of ye and then help myself?"

I was tremblin', and I own up to it. Bob was gettin' more and more spotted.

"Speak up quick!" jest was what the feller requested, squintin'.

"Great horned toads!" Bob went off.

"If you will tell us how we are goin' to fork over with our hands 'way up like this, mebbey we kin 'blige ye, but every time we make a move to go down you holler fer us to go up, and it is plain as a bloomin' blossom on a jig-water plant that we can't do both!"

"That's a plain statement of fact," I wrung in my say-so. "We don't care a pistareen about leavin' our bones here, and as you seem to have it all your own way I guess we had better fork over the du-dads. Am I right, Bob?"

And Bob allowed that I was more'n half right, anyhow.

"Wait, I'll fix that," said the paper bag, and he stepped up to us, one gun covering us both as night covers the earth about midnight or thereabouts, and with the other hand he relieved us of our poppers. "There, now go down and come up with your where-with, and you can soon go on your way rejoicin'."

He stepped back, with that, and I took a new breath. I had been holdin' the one I had, for that gun looked as likely to go off as not, and a little more so, and I felt the sweat a-standin' out on my forehead as big as marbles, seemed to me. As fer Bob, seemed to me there was nothing of him but spots, by this time. In fact, it was all one spot, and that spot was scare.

Down we went, quicker than scat, and brought up our hard-earned dollars, which we forked over to that galoot grudgin'ly, and he stowed 'em away as if he had every moral right to 'em. He certainly had the bulge on us, and the deadeest cinch on our du-dads that you ever heard of. I had about a hundred rocks, and You-bet Bob had about the same number of bones, with which we had expected to paint the town of Hold-up as lurid as a sunset.

But, that paper bag took 'em all, not leavin' us even a two-bit piece for a whistle-wetter when we got to our destination. It was rough, I'm telling you. Maybe you have never been there, gentle reader, eh? Well, you needn't never want to be. No matter how brave you are, when the cold tube of a five-shooter looks you in the eye my word for it you are going to take water, or worse. I won't say anything about myself, but You bet Bob ain't a coward by any means, and that feller made him pony up all the same as if he had been the tenderest tenderfoot on the face of the earth; fact, sure as you live.

"Is that all you have got?" wanted to know the feller, then, when he had pocketed our piles.

"Every blame cent," said I.

"You have raised us our limit," said You-bet.

"Small change and all?" the paper bag wanted to make sure.

"Every gosh hanged bit, from peso to penny," declared You-bet, in solemn dead earnest.

"All right, I'll take your word for it this time," said the paper bag. "If you have lied to me beware of the hereafter, for it is a sin to lie, as you must know."

With that, the good Samaritan backed away from us, still keepin' his gun aimed in

our direction and carrying our own with him in his other hand.

"Say," yauped You-bet, "ain't you goin' to leave us our tools of war?"

"That's what's the matter," I chipped in.

"Yes, I'll leave you them," said the paper bag. "You stay where ye are for five minutes, by straight count, and you'll find 'em along the trail around the bend here when you come along."

And he kept on backin' away, Bob a grittin' of his teeth and lookin' all over one spot of "mad," and I doin' all I could to keep from diggin' my heels into my pony and dashin' after that feller and takin' the chances of a pill for my trouble, though I ain't a brave by any means.

It was gallin', I tell you.

Well, that feller he backed away and away, till he came to the bend, and the very last thing we seen of him was the hole in his gun lookin' at us from around a big bowlder that stood thar at the bend.

And then You-bet Bob began to swear, and he is a swearer, you bet! He is the most accomplished artist in that especial line that Arizona can show, and there are a good many things in which she excels, of which that is one. I let him do the swearin' for us both, and when he let up to get his breath I chipped in "Amen!"

"Cy, what's goin' to be done?" said Bob.

"Hang me ef I know, Bob," said I.

"We are clean broke," said he.

"That's right," said I.

"No, be hanged if it is!" he yelled, with a special edition of swear words. "It's dead wrong!"

"We might as well tote back home, I reckon," said I. "We don't want to ride into Hold-up strapped, do we? Not much of a good time without money, I opine. What say?"

"Nary a go back!" said Bob, chopplin' his teeth down hard, a way he has when he means a thing in dead earnest. "We'll go on and do our paintin' just the same, and if we git left it won't be my fault! Say, ain't that five minutes about up?"

"I guess it is," said I.

"Then come on," said he, and on we ambled.

But we looked sheepish, I'm telling you. Just think of it! Two of us, big, strappin' fellers, to be held up by a thing with a paper bag over his head and looted in broad daylight— Oh! it made us mad clear through and through! It did for a fact. But, then, it was the gun that did the business; not the man. A gun is a gun all the same, even in the hands of a woman, and it will shoot just as hard, no matter who pulls it off.

CHAPTER II.

ROUND ON TRUST.

"WELL, we found our guns. That was one thing to the credit of the cuss in the paper bag; he hadn't lied to us on that score. Maybe he had a thought of the hereafter, same as he told us, and didn't want to commit himself. No matter, we got the guns."

When we rode into Hold-up it was gettin' nigh onto feed trough time, and me and Bob were about as hungry as two bears and a cub. But, there we were, without a blame cent to bless ourselves with, and we knowed well enough they didn't give fodder away in that camp, specially on a holiday.

"Cy," said You-bet, "I'm all-gone hungry."

"Bob," said I, heavin' a sigh, "I'm wuss 'n that; I am as dry as a desert, nigh-about."

"Cy," said he, fetchin' a sigh that discounted mine, "it's onkind of you to mention it. I was tryin' to fool my stomach and make it believe that it was all hungry."

"Bob," said I, sollum, "it ain't no use for you to try to fool a stomach like your'n, that knows the difference only too well, and you orter be ashamed of yourself

to try on any such measly trick. We have got to have a bracer for dinner, and then a dinner to brace us."

"I opine you are two-thirds right," said he.

"I knowed I was," said I.

"But, right there is a riddle," said You-bet.

"You bet thar is," said I. "Kin you solve et, Bobbert?"

"I'm goin' to try to, somehow," said Bob, and he chopped his teeth hard.

By that time we had fetched the Grand Central Hotel, the chief place of the kind in the camp, and thar we pulled up and throwed our strings over the nearest tie-posts, and as we slid off our ponies You-bet whispered a word into my ear and I nodded.

Right here, dear reader I want to pause to remark that this literary trail is somethin' new to me, and it is the hardest kind of work for me to keep consultin' the dictionary every two minutes to see whether I'm on or off. There! I have fired the blame thing into the corner, and I'll play this hand out alone or bu'st! I guess you will know what I'm gettin' at, even if it ain't strictly Websterian. I used to have some knowledge, but it is a dozen years sence I have done any grubbin' with a pen.

Well, nuff said. We ambled straight to the peeazzy and mounted the three steps that led to the same, where about a dozen fellers were sunnin' themselves in the most approved fashion.

"Hello, citerzens!" called out You-bet.

"Same ter you, strangers," some feller thar made answer.

"Ruther a fine day," I chipped in to help Bob along, not wantin' him to go it all alone on a weak hand—ruther stomach.

"Wull, yas, ruther," the same feller drawled. "S'pose ye have come in to witness the sports this afternoon, hey? We aire goin' to have a bang-up time here."

"That's what we are lookin' for," said You-bet. "We are from Cross Crick, and if there is any games on that come in our line, we want to speak here and now for a show to enter. See? Mebby we will be the only ones out from our diggin's, and we want to hold down the honor of our home base. Right, Cy?"

"Altogether right," said I.

"By ther way," said Bob, "which one of you good lookin' fellers is boss of this hyer shebang?"

And he run his eyes over the lot of them as if he was sizin' up a bunch of cattle, and every blame one o' them looked as pleased as a candidate fer office at the compliment.

There was one Dutchman, one Irishman, and one Swede, that you couldn't mistake even in the dark. The rest were average galoots 'cept one Chinee and one nigger, but they wasn't in it, so to say; they made a flock by themselves, or ruther, two flocks, each one by himself.

"Samson Brown is ther proprietor," one feller spoke up, "and reckon you will find him inside."

"Good enough," said Bob. "That is a good strong name, anyhow."

"And he's as strong as his name," said the feller.

You-bet ambled right in, me at his heels, and thar was no mistakin' the big feller behind the bar in his shirt sleeves. He had a neck like a ox, and arms as big as my legs. I seen Bob sort o' git spotted when he spotted him, but he was game, all the same.

"Goin' to feed purty soon?" asked You-bet.

"We have dinner at plumb twelve-thirty," the landlord answered.

"Wull, we kin stand it off till that time, mebbe," said my pard. "We are dyin' hungry, though, and want a chance at the first spread, landlord."

"All right, register there," and he shoved out a fem of common brown paper that was

stitched at together at the back with a wax-end. "Dinner is a dollar a head, to-day, I may as well tell ye."

"Never mind ther price," says Bob. "Money is no object to us to-day. We are here for a rip-snortin' good time, and if we don't have it it won't be our fault. Here, pard," to me, after he had struggled to spell out his own name, "fling 'em your cognomen hyer."

I took the pencil and chicken-footed my royal signature all over a full-quarter page or more, and then I sung out:

"Come, boys, let's likker."

That was what You-bet had whispered to me to do, when we slid out of our saddles, as I have mentioned.

Glory! you never seen sech a quick move in all your life as them fellers made. That peeazzer was vacated in about one jerk of a mule's lifter, and they was all in a string at the bar, all but the Chinee and the nig, and they sort o' held off as if it didn't mean them too.

"Come right on, you two," chipped in You-bet on my deal. "This means the whole house, and you are in it. We will treat ther hull blame world, this time, from sunny Africa to the Emerald Isle, and from frozen Sweden to smilin' China on t'other side of ther habitable globe! Amble up hyer, you two, and take your places! We mean to go the whole hog or none!"

I glanced at Bob, but he didn't notice me, and when I looked in the direction of that man Samson behind the bar I ruther weakened and felt like throwin' up my band. But, that wouldn't never done; me and my pard stand together through thick and thin, and I have never gone back on him yet, though I thought we was goin' to find it a little thicker and thinner there than we had bargained for. But, that didn't worry Bob any, parently.

Ther nigger and the Chinee had squeezed in at the head and tail of the bar, by this time, and the landlord was settin' out his stuff free handed, with a big smile on his face.

I wondered what that smile would be like when it came to the pinch and no collateral was forthcomin'.

"Don't be afraid to fill 'em up, boys," said You-bet, and you bet they wasn't, not many of 'em. "It costs just ther same, whether its a snifter or only a leetle," minded 'em.

As fer Bob and me, we wur in et, you bet, and didn't git left when the bottle passed our way.

I was beginnin' to feel weak at the knees by that time.

That proprietor seemed to me to grow bigger by ther minute, and I wondered what would become of me and my pard when ther day of reckonin' came 'round, which I was sure would be in about a minute.

"How is it, boys?" I hollered out, to sort of screw my courage up a bit and keep from flunkin'.

"Sehr goot!" yauped out the Dutchman.

"Begorra, it's foine!" the Irishman.

"Allee samee bully!" the Chinee.

And all the rest of them had something to say, in a way that ought to have made the landlord feel proud. I wondered if he wouldn't let that go as pay, and say no more about it.

Well, all things come to an end, and so did that treat, and the fellers began to get away from the bar, wipin' ther mouths on their sleeves as they went, and I began to feel like as if a cold sweat was goin' to break out all over me. Bob had made me responsible for the round; I had ordered it.

I looked at Bob, but he was as cool as ice, and I wondered if he was goin' to let me stand and take the brunt of ther hull business, but he guv me a wink that made me feel a little better, and I knowed that he must see some way out of it. What it was I couldn't see for the life of me, at that minute.

And meanwhile all ther galoots was leavin' the bar, and Samson was lookin' as hard at me as if he was kalk'latin' where he would begin to fix me out. The last man left the bar, You-bet Bob didn't move, and I had to. I put my hand into my pocket and sidled up, wonderin' what kind of a lame excuse I was goin' to make, when Bob acted.

CHAPTER III.

SILLY GILLY ARRIVES.

"Hold on thar, Cy!" Bob he sung out; "this hyer was my treat."

He jammed his hand into his pocket, and made a break fur the bar, and I got on in a second.

"No, you don't!" I hollered, wavin' him back. "It is my treat, and I am goin' to settle ther score. Your money ain't no good here, You-bet Bob. Keep away now, I tell ye!"

Bob got spotted, and made as if to crowd me out, actin' it as purty as you ever seen in your life, and he is no slouch at actin', you bet.

"Your treat your grandmother!" he yauped at me. "It was me asked up the house, and I leave it to the landlord if it wasn't. You may jest as well get out and let me pay, for I am going to do it anyhow, and no stoppin' me. Landlord, ain't it as I say?"

"I thought ther other gent—" the landlord began, and I caught him out on the fly.

"What did I tell ye?" I hollered. "It was my treat, and you are not in it, You-bet Bob! Don't ther landlord say it was? You kin do it next time, but this time I am in it right up to my chin. You might as well put up your money, for you can't pay for what I order, you bet you can't!"

Put up his money! Bless you, reader, he couldn't have put up a cent if his life had depended on it!

"I say it was my treat!" yauped Bob.

"And I say it was mine!" I yauped back at him.

"Who first spoke of comin' to this camp, anyhow?" he wanted to know. "It was me, that's who, and when I ask a feller to go with me I expect to pay the cost of ther trip."

"Ther same right hyer," I hollered at him. "You didn't ask me any more'n I asked you. Anyhow, you didn't ask this crowd up to swill, and I ain't goin' to stand by and let you pay for it. See?" And I talked as tall as if I was goin' to git up and howl.

"No use fightin' about it, boys," said Samson, who looked to me as big as an elephant, by that time. "One of you pan out the dust, no matter which, and then you can fix it up 'tween yourselves afterwards. Or, each of you pays half, that will make it so fair that there will be no room for either one to do any kickin'. What is the use of a fuss?"

"That's what I want ter know," I chipped in right spot.

"And just what I want ter know, too," You-bet follered my lead.

"I don't 'low nobody to pay half on my treat," I topped on top o' that.

"And I pay all or I don't pay nothin', that's the kind of a rooster I am," capped Bob.

And thar we wur, deadlocked, and that landlord a-gapin' hard at us for his ducats for the round, and neither one of us worth the price of one dose, let alone ther hull blame p'scription.

"What are you goin' to do about it?" he asked.

"I'll pay, on course," said I.

"Here's your mon," said Bob.

We both said it at oncet, and both made as if to draw our hands out of our pockets, but we was watchin' each other the same as if we was goin' to draw our guns and wade in, to do damage.

"You might as well give et up," said he. And we said that both to oncet, too, and the crowd around was beginnin' to git interested in et, to see which would come out on top and win the trick. Bless ye, it was a trick we was both interested in, jest at that time, I'm tellin' ye. But the mildew had gone to my head some, and I had lost all my scare, now.

"I'll see you further first," I hollered.

"And I'll see you further'n that," he hollered.

"I'm goin' to pay this bill," said I.

"I'm goin' to pay it myself," said he.

"You won't, not much!" and I bristled up as I said it.

"I will, or I'll know the reason why!" and he bristled up, too.

"I'll see," said I.

"You will?" yauped he.

"Yes, I will!" I yauped back.

We stepped up close, and it looked bad.

"Well, that's what you will, fer I'm goin' to—"

"You know better when ye say it," I told him.

He had to laugh, at that, and I laughed, too, right hearty; and that took all the 'pearance of mad out of it, and the landlord looked better. And just at that blessed minnit the gong sounded fer dinner, and the landlord said:

"Well, boys, never mind; there's dinner, and maybe you kin come to some kind of terms before you get out again. I ain't in no hurry, where I know it is good, so don't spill no blood over it."

"I'll pay it after dinner, then," said I.

"I'll pay it after dinner, shur," said Bob.

And in we marched to the feed trough, and planted ourselves at that part of the spread where the truck looked most invitin', and there we began to root in a way that would have made hogs hang their heads with shame.

"How was that?" You-bet whispered to me, while we stuffed.

"That was good," said I; "but how is this? Without money and without price, b'gosh!"

"He'll kill us," Bob just opined.

"No he won't," I prophesied.

"Why not?"

"Cause we owe him, now. We'll be treated like lords, you see if we ain't. I feel a heap better than I did."

"Hope you are right," he said. "He is too big a feller fer me to tackle, and we wouldn't stand no show hyer in a strange camp if we both went fer him. We have got to play nice."

"I leave that to you," said I.

"All right," said he.

"Let me sample that yan dish," said he, p'intin' with his knife.

"I will, ef you let me sample that yan one," said I, also p'intin' with my knife.

We both rounded up the dishes in question, and when we had sampled thar wasn't but a sample left for the next feller, I'm tellin' ye. Bob scooped about half off onto his plate, and me ditto.

By the way, dear reader, this hyer trail is a good deal plainer sence I heaved Webster into the corner and started in alone. Webster is all right in his place, no doubt, in perlite sassiety, but he can't git down to the meat of the matter in describin' a holiday in a howlin' Southwestern camp, you bet!

Well, we filled in to kill, my pard and me, and by the time we had done we had also hit upon a further plan to stand off the landlord.

When we couldn't hold another blamed bit, we ambled out to the bar-room again, where we sort o' sauntered around a spell, and sort o' got separated from each other.

You-bet, he purty soon sidles up to the bar, dives his hand into his pocket, and whispers—

"How much?"

"Hold on thar!" I hollers, from the other

end of the room. "Don't you take a cent of his money, landlord!" And I waltzed over that way in about two steps, but Bob had time to whisper: "I'll sneak in and pay when he ain't lookin'." And the landlord nodded.

"No, you don't!" I yauped out. "I am goin' to pay this damage myself. I am doin' things to-day, you bet!"

"Well, you kin bet you ain't then," said Bob. "I am goin' to pay this, or it won't be paid, that's all. Come along o' me, and take a seat on ther peeazzy till yer dinner settles."

I started with him, with a wink to ther landlord, but fore I got to the door, I turned back, sayin':

"By ther way, landlord," free and easy like, "have you got a pipe and 'baccy thar handy? Left mine in my other clothes when I changed."

"Why, shur," said the landlord, and he produced them forthwith. And as I went back to get 'em my pard hollered out that he had his eye on me and warned me not to pay that bill.

I didn't pay it, but I whispered to the landlord like Bob had done: "I'll pay when he ain't lookin'." And then I filled my pipe and went out to the peeazzy, and thar me and pard spread ourselves as much as if we owned the hull blame shebang and a slice of the camp besides.

While we was spreadin' like aforesaid, me on the best chair with my feet on the rail, and You-bet standin' on the ground jest in front, with his elbows restin' on the rail, what should come along up ther street but the consarnedest lookin' combination you ever sot eyes on in your life. It was a little bit of a roly-poly burro, and a-straddle of it was somethin' that looked like a cross 'tween a tenderfoot yahoo and a nat'ral born howlin' ijjit.

CHAPTER IV.

TIED TO A BURRO'S HIND END.

"Cy," said my pard, "what is et?"

"Bob," I answers, "I can't name et, fer a fact."

There wur only two or three on the peeazzy besides us, just then. All ther rest of the galoots wur inside.

Straight up to the steps of the peeazzy ther critter pranced, its rider's legs a-floppin' in and out at every jump, like as if he had to straddle to keep his feet from strikin' the ground.

He didn't clear the ground by a good ways, that's straight. That burro didn't look a bit bigger'n a full-grown rabbit. But no matter; up he pranced, as aforesaid, right plumb up to ther steps, and thar he stopped, and that burro jest braced his feet and looked my pard in the eye.

"Knows ye, Bob," I had to asseverate.

"Seems to, you're right," Bob had to admit.

And we hadn't no more'n said so, when that burro let out one of ther most by-goshed-est brays that you ever heard of in your life, right sraight into Bob's face, and I had to laugh if Bob killed me for et the next minute; couldn't help it, ye understand. And Bob, he sort o' got spotted back of his ears, as I could see from whar I sot. And that wasn't all, either; the rider of that burro put his hand up to his mouth and let out a yaup that was second only to the bray of ther burro.

"Hello-oo-oooh!" he bellered, and blame me ef I didn't expect ter see ther shattered welkin that poets sigh about come down in fragments all over ther surroundin' vicinity, so to put et, what with the bray of the burro and that beller out of the rider together.

"Sa-ay, what's bitin' ye?" demanded Bob, sort o' raspy.

But that loonytick didn't answer; he let

out another beller, and ther burro heaved up another awful bray stralght at my pard, as before.

I was laffin' ready to kill, by that time. I had taken my feet down off'n their perch on ther rail, and was hugrin' one foot across t'other knee. Ther crowd was pourin' out of ther bar room.

"I'll make ye do that ag'in, blast ye!" said Bob, and he ups with his hoof and kicked that burro one right under ther jaw. Ther critter launched back and opened its mouth at him in a way that made me think my pard's head was goin' to be snapped off close to ther stump.

"Do et erg'in if ye dar'!" yauped Bob, "and see ef I don't jump clean down yer blasted throat— Yaou-aou-aouch!"

That awful, fetchin' yell meant somethin' else.

I had been huggin' one foot across t'other knee, as aforesaid.

The crowd was heavin' out of the bar-room skelter-helter, Irishman, Swede, nig and all.

Well, that Chinaman, Hong-Kong they called him, he snagged himself onto that foot I was huggin', and away he went, end over teakittle!

I was startin' to laff at him, when blame me ef that heathen Chineese didn't topple clean over ther rail and come down with his head plunk onto my pard's pet corn!

That was what fetched ther yell out of Bob and cut short what he was sayin' at ther minute.

"Dol-buckle your yaller hide!" You-bet yelled, grabbin' up his injured hoof in his hands and dancin' a hornpipe one legged. "What d'ye mean by buckin' onto my corns in that sort o' fashin?"

"Me allee samee no go to do," the Chineese proceeded to 'polygize, as he tried to git on to his pins; but that didn't do fer my pard. What did Bob do but let go of his foot, grab that Chineese by ther pig-tail, and in two holy seconds he had tied that pig-tail to ther tail of ther burro, close up!

Then thar was fun, you bet!

That bloomin' yahoo, meantime—though thar hadn't been a good deal of the meantime about it, he had kept right on a-bellerin', and nobody knowed up ter date what he was a-bellerin' about.

"Hi-yil! Hully yow-yow chow!" yauped that Chineese, or words to that effect. "Me be killee, me be killee!"

"And sarve ye blame right ef ye airel!" yelled my pard. "Mebby ye will look whar ye are a-divin' next time! That is all a blame Chineese is good fur, anyhow, b'gosh!"

That burro had jest wakened up to ther fact that somethin' was goin' on behind his back, so to say. He looked around, with his pleasant expression of countenance, and when he took in ther situashun you orter seen the smile that played around his mouth.

Ther yahoo, too, stopped his bellerin' to see what was in ther wind, and he was jest in time to find out. Ther burro looked t'other way, stretched his neck, braced his fore legs, and up went his rear portions like as if the earth had suddenly exploded under him and sent him flyin'. Great Goshun! but et was laffable, I tell ye!

Ther yahoo, not prepared fer et, went straight over ther burro's head onto ther steps in a way that 'most dislocated his back in a dozen places; ther Chineese, in ther manner aforesaid, was tied jest close enough so that the rearin' up of ther burro's hind end jerked him nicely into posish, and them two hind hoofs of that burro took him fair and square on that part of of his 'natomy that nature intended fer kickin' purposes.

Et was 'musin', now I tell ye!

Down kem that burro's feelers, to load up fer another left, and down kem Chineese. Up went burro's hind end, yankin' the Chineese up into posish by the pig-tail nice as could

be, and then them two hind feelers wur planted square onto the right spot again, and the way that Chinees did yell was a caution to cats!

"Hi-hi! yi-yi! Chun-a-chin-a-lung-a-kong-a-long-a-lunk-a!" or words to about the same tune, he bellered. "Save me! save me! Me allee samee be blame soon killed, you bettee! Ki-yi! ki-yi! 'Melican man stoppee him!"

But, by that time my pard was like me, laffin' so hard that he couldn't do anything but hug his sides. It was enough ter make a sick dorg laff!

It was up burro, up Chinees; and every kick fetched the heathen clear of the ground and fairly made his heels snap together—his sandals had been snapped off ther very first kick. And then it was down burro, down Chinees, and then up again so lightnin' quick that it 'most made my head swin.

I bet that burro was kickin' at the rate of twenty kicks to ther second. Mebbe it wasn't so many, but et looked so. And glory only knows whar et would ended ef it hadn't been fer ther yahoo.

By that time he had gathered himself together, so to say, and had got a dozen or so of taer kinks out of his back.

"Whoap!" he piped, in a high falsetter voice. "Whoap, Tobias!" And he grabbed holt of ther burro's off ear and ther critter was as meek as a lamb in a moment—so was ther Chinees.

When ther motion ceased to mote any more, poor Hong-Kong went down all in a heap by ther burro's hind heels, and thar he laid, in a dead faint more or less, and I opine et was 'siderable more than less. Then my pard seized the golden opportunity to unhitch him.

"Be a 'minder to him not to step onto my corns with his head no more," You-bet growled.

"You'll be hanged for manslather, Bob," said I.

"Blazes!" bellered Bob. "I didn't do et; et was ther burro!"

"You hitched 'em to," I explained.

"But I didn't do ther kickin'," he apologized.

"No matter, it's all the same on you!"

"Et does matter, too," said he. "But, don't you worry, Cy; ther heathen ain't dead yet."

Sure enough, he wasn't; but I 'pine et wouldn't taken but two kicks and a half more to made him deader'n a stone Injun in a cave dweller's mound; he was more'n haff dead.

"Py chinger! dot vas tough!" exclaimed ther Dutchman, pityingly.

"Never seen a Chinees that wasn't tough," 'sponded Bob, off-hand. "It is hard matter to kill 'em, Dutcher."

"Begorra, Oi would want none av it in mine!" chipped in the Irishman, a ruther sandy feller he seemed to be, too. "Oi believe it would 've killed me outright, so Oido."

"It would maak ya yump, Aa bet," observed ther Swede, in his B flat way of murderin' English.

"Ther burro did ther jumpin'," said my pard, off-hand.

"Why, it's Silly Gilly!" suddenly exclaimed ther landlord of ther shebang, who had just then got out, owin' to some delay. "It's Silly Gilly and his burro, boys, sure enough!"

"Wull we know that," said some feller, speakin' fer ther crowd. "Tell us some-thing we don't know, Samson. Everybody knows Silly Gilly, ther butt of ther Buttes, we sh'ud reckon ter opine. But, what's ther matter with him, that is ther thing we want ter hear. Didn't yer git onto ther way he kem hollerin'?"

CHAPTER V.

BOB TACKLES A BUCKER.

Et don't take long fer your Southwestern crowd to turn from one thing to another, you bet!

They kin do that trick about as handy as they kin assemble at a bar at a call to swill, or congregate at ther feed-trough when ther alarm goes forth that dinner is ready.

Ther poor Chinees havin' got onto his pins, and ambled off by that time, one hand holdin' ther place whar his cue was rooted fast, and the other restin' 'fectionately on ther part whar ther burro had done most damage, ther crowd was ready ter learn what ther yahoo had ter offer.

D'ye notice, dear reader, how much slicker I am gettin' along sence I heaved Webster into ther corner? Spellin' and all that is all right, no doubt, when you are gettin' down to fine writin'; but for plain sailin', 'specially when you set out to tell a story like this, I believe in goin' it alone. You will notice that I am jest gittin' warmed up to my sub-jick, too.

Silly Gilly, as they called him, was holdin' his burro by one ear, and looked as if he had suthin' on his mind.

My pard guv me ther nudge.

"Wasn't that tall, Cy?" he asked.

"Tall as a horse, Bob, sure 'nuff!" I had to admit.

"And ain't we havin' fun!"

"Dead oceans of et!"

"And more a-comin', I feel et in my bones!" expounded You-bet, lowerin' one eye at me.

"All right, Bobbert," said I; "I am ready fer anything that comes, now, after that dinner. But, what's ther yahoo sayin'?"

"Robber?" demanded ther landlord.

"Yes, sir," said ther yahoo, shakin' his head sollum and lookin' wild, "a robber; and he tuck all the money I had."

"Whar was he?" some feller asked him.

"Not a haff a mile out o' camp," he answered. "He can't be far off, and mebbey you kin ketch him."

The crowd laughed.

"Oh! it ain't nothin' to laff at!" ther yahoo blatted. "He took all ther money I had, and that's the reason that I kem right here quick's I could, thinkin' mebbe you would help me!"

The crowd laughed ther more.

"Help ye, Gilly?" said one feller. "What do you think you could do to'rds ketchin' a robber?"

"I mean to do it, whether you help me or not," the yahoo declared. "That robber got every cent I had, 'most four dollars, and now I can't buy no dinner and no bite fer my burro—"

Really, I thort he was goin' to cry.

I felt sorry fer him, and I knowed Bob did by the spots 'hind his ears.

"Say, sonny, what fer a feller was he?" asked my pard, as brash as you please, seeln' we'd seen him.

"He was tallish," said ther yahoo, "and had a paper bag over his head with holes poked in so's he could see, and he had a gun as big as my arm—or anyhow it seemed to be."

"Ther same feller, b'gosh!" said Bob.

I could 'a' killed him on ther spot, by mighty! One o' my eyes rolled over in my head and took a squint at ther landlord.

Glory! he looked as big as a monumence, and he was lookin' at my pard in a way that made my blood run cold to see. I thought we was in fer it, sure as you are born.

"Did you see him?" Mr. Samson demanded.

I seen my pard swoller a lump in his throat, but he came right up to ther scratch with his answer.

"You-bet we seen him!" he said. That is a pet word with him, you bet; that is why he is called by that purty name. I have been with him so long, too, that I am sort o' ketchin' it meself.

"And did he try to hold you up?" Samson asked, borin' holes clear through Bob with his eyes.

My pard guv a short o' pride, and seemed ter grow a hull inch taller.

"Sa-ay, look heer," he drawled, "do we look like a pair ov yaks that could be held up and gone through by one man? We have a couple o' guns apiece hyer, and I opine he would find et warm weather jest about that time o' day; hey, Cy?"

"I should go sneeze ef he wouldn't," I had to agree.

"We seen him, as I said," Bob continnered, "but ther last we seen of him he was backin' off around a bowlder, and our guns was in his direction, you bet! We'd 'a' shot ther hull blame head off him!"

"Ef we had got ther chance," I put in, in my mind.

"Too bad that you didn't do it, too," said Samson. "This ain't ther first case of ther kind."

"What?" and my pard was surprised, in appearance.

"I say it ain't ther first case of ther kind. He is first hyer and then thar and nobody has been able to git ther drop on him yet. Don't ye know there is a reward out fer him?"

"Sho! is that so?"

"It is, fer a dead certain fact."

"Cy, why didn't we know that?" my pard asked, turnin' to me.

I had a blame good noshun to floor him right thar on ther ground, ef sech a mixed statement will pass. No time now to consult Web. As if it would 'a' done us any good if thar had been a million dollars on his head.

"Why didn't we, Bob!" I exclaimed back at him. "It could as well been our boodle as not—that is ter say, ef it is fer him dead or alive. It was long range, ye know."

"Yes, he didn't give us no fair show," said Bob.

I said "Amen," in my mind.

"But, landlord, what's ter be done about this chap that ain't got no wherewith to come in fer a feed?" asked Bob, jerkin' his thumb at Silly Gilly.

"That's no funeral o' mine, is it?" said Samson.

"What do you say about et, Cy?" turnin' to me. "Shall I order him a show at ther feed-trough?"

"Shur!" said I, prompt enough. "Landlord, give ther boy a bite, and I'll settle with ye—"

"No yer don't!" said Bob, pickin' me right up at that p'int. "I am doin' this—"

"No yer ain't!" said I, pickin' him off. "This is my say-so, and you want to keep out, see? Landlord, feed him, and add it—"

"Yas, feed him, and add it to my 'count," Bob picked me off. "I'll see to settlin'—in fact, might as well pay in advance," puttin' his hand deep in his pocket in make believe.

"Shur!" said I, jammin' in my hand, too, but before I could pull et out again, my pard pulled a gun with his other hand, and I pulled one with my other hand, and thar we was, deadlocked as dead as you ever seen in your life, and what was goin' to be done about it?

"I tell ye your money ain't no good hyer!" said Bob.

"And I tell you that your money ain't no good hyer!" said I.

"I'll pay it in spite of ye!" said Bob.

"And I'll pay it in spite of you!" said I.

"Then he will be paid double!" said Bob.

"Double let et be, then!" sez I.

My pard turned and guv ther landlord a nod and a wink, and while he was doin' that I motioned that it would be all right, and ther landlord was better pleased 'n if he had had ther money in hand.

"Come along, then," says he to ther yahoo, "and I'll give ye a fodder on these gentlemen's say-so."

"But, my burro?" said Gilly.

"We'll see to him," said my pard.

"Oh, yes; we'll see to him," I anted.

That satisfied ther yahoo, and he follered ther landlord in, and as soon as he was out of sight my pard lighted onto that burro's back.

Glory! of all ther buckin' I ever seen in my life, that burro done ther wurst, just then. Never seen ther like of it! He doubled up in ther middle till he was nuthin' but a sharp p'int on top, and on top o' that p'int was my pard. Then he would come down all standin', as if he was tryin' to jam himself cl'ar through my pard and come out at ther top.

But, my pard was game, and ther burro soon found that he couldn't onseat him that way, so ther next dodge he tried was to bolt, and he done that to perfection. He shot off like a ball out of a gun, and thar was Bob right in ther air. But, he didn't stay thar; that ain't 'cordin' to ther plans of his natur'; he was soon settin' on ther ground as hard as if he had designed to implant or imprint his sign manuel thar fer future generations to admire. I ain't poetical; I simply soar semi-occasionally. In plain lingo, he kem down with a force that 'most killed the life outen him.

CHAPTER VI.

MAKING DUTCHER TAKE A LESSON.

"Bob, what ye doin' thar?" I yauped at him.

"You mind your own business, wull ye!" he growled at me.

"That is what I most gen'ly sometimes do, ain't it, pardner?" said I.

"You want to be doin' it just about now, if you ever did," he glowered my way.

Ye see, ther crowd was laffin' at him, and that was what made him so sour about the way he had been dumped on ther ground.

He now got onto his pins.

"Mebby thar is some other galoot hyer would like ter try et?" he gently hinted at 'em. And the way he kept on glowerin' sort o' made most of 'em laff less than before.

Meantime—though thar hadn't been much meantime about it—but I mean what little thar had been, that burro had stopped runnin' off, had turned, and had ambled gently back to ther startin' p'int and stood thar waitin' fer somebody else to tackle ther job.

Nobody seemed to want to 'cept Bob's invite.

He turned onto me.

"Don't you want to take a ride, pard?" he asked me.

"Not any. I thank ye!" said I. "It is a heap more fun seein' other folks ride."

"Oh! is it?"

"You bet!"

"Yaw, yaw, dot vas rightd," said the Dutchman, whose name, by the way, we had got onto as Fritz Noodle, and who was findin' it hard to keep his laugh down; "it peen sehr goot fun to seen you ride, mister."

"Ther doose yer say!" said Bob.

"Yaw, yaw," ther Dutcher.

I knowed what was comin', and ther Dutcher found out ther next minute.

"Enjoyed et, did ye?" said my pard.

"Yaw, yaw, you bet!"

"All right; I don't mind havin' some of that fun myself," said my pard, in dead earnest, and he pulled a gun—not really for publication, as et war, as papers puts et, but as a guar—grau—gran—Obl ther mischief, spell it for yourselves; you know what I mean, anyhow. Ter show that he meant biz.

That Dutcher sort o' got white 'round ther gills.

"Git aboard!" said my pard.

"Mine gootness!" cried Fritz. "I vas nefer on a bony in mine life!"

"Thar ain't no pony about this feller," said Bob. "He is only a burro, and not much of a burro at that. Git aboard, I tell ye!"

His gun took a look at the Dutcher's nose, and Dutcher looked like a clean gone loony-tick, so skart he was. His knees knocked together, and I could read a wish in his off eye

that he was away back in the wilderness of his beloved fatherland about that minute.

"Gott-vor-tammerung!" he gasperated, or somethin' that sounded like that, anyhow. "I peen killed, sure like my name vas Fritz Noodle!"

"You'll be killed if you don't, shur pop!" my pard yauped at him.

Everybody around was a-grinnin' from ear to ear.

"But, I can't ride!" ther Dutcher pleaded.

"Now is yer time to l'arn, then," advised Bob.

"Yaw, but I no wants to know; I hafe no use vor a baby mule, anyhow. Let somepody else—"

"Nary a body else," Bob chopped him off short. "You are ther galoot what's got ter take ther first lesson. Not want to ride? Gosh-a-mity! that is one of ther 'complishments o' fine art, ridin' is, 'specially a buckin' burro. You don't know what a golden opperchunity you ar' lettin' slip, my friend. But, et won't git away; I have got a cinch onto it and I'll hold et for ye. Come, now, into that 'ar saddle with yer ponderosity, or I'll let sunshine in through a hole in her ker-kiss!"

Bob looked awful shoot as he said it, and ther poor Dutcher fairly shook in his breeches.

He was a short feller, with little legs, but he had a corpus as round as a plum dumplin'. In fact, he and that thar burro looked somethin' alike, save that ther beast had ther most ears.

"Mein Gott! mein Gott!" ther Dutcher howled. "Id vas better I peen dead vor I vas porn, ain'dt id? I peen dead now, anyways, sure like I vas alive! Blease, good mister, don't make me go near der beast; I peen killed vor I gets me half-vay on him, I know I vas!"

"Come! git a go on you!" bellered my pard.

Down on his knees dropped ther Dutcher, and ther crowd jest let loose in a wild hooray ov laffter.

"Share me, sbare me!" ther poor devil whined most pichus ter behold. "Id vas pedder you put a millstone mein neck aroundt, ain'dt id, and fling me der puddle in, maybe. Sbare me, oh, sbare me! Dink of mein oldt mutter in der vatterlandt, und sbare me!"

My pard was bustin' with laff all over, 'cept in his face.

"That is jest what I am thinkin' about," he hollered. "What will she think of a son like you that has come cl'ar out to Arryzony and can't ride a burro? You have got ter take yer fu'st lessing, and that settles et! Either that, or your poor old mutter in der vatterlandt will receive tidin's uv yer demise. Come, now, git up out uv that, and be a man!"

As he said so, You-bet stepped for'd and poked ther nose of his gun right plunk into ther Dutcher's ear, and he got up in a mighty hurry, I'm tellin' ye.

By that time ther was a tremenjus crowd around. Dinner was done with all over ther camp, and ther citerzens was assemblin' fer ther sport of ther afternoon. We heard said they had had a red hot time durin' ther forenoon with racin' ponies and shootin'.

Meantime—what little thar had been of et, that thar burro had been standin' thar as pashunt as ary statyur, waitin' fer its master ter put in his appear.

We were 'sponsible fer et, my pard 'nd me.

Up got ther Dutcher, as I aforesaid, and ther 'lacrity with which he got over to whar that burro was waitin' fer him was curus to behold. His short legs took steps faster'n anybody could count.

"Sbare me, oh! sb—"

"Up with ye!" thundered my pard.

Ther Dutcher had paused to turn his pleadin' eyes 'pon Bob at ther last minnit, but my pard hadn't no heart of flesh in his buzzum

just then. It was stone, dead, cold, hard, adymantine stone.

Noodle grabbed hold uv ther burro by ther brash ov his neck, and my pard grabbin' him by ther tepee ov his britches, up he went and belly-flopped across ther back ov ther beast in a way ter make a sick dog laff. And thar he hung, waitin' to be lanchd off in ther direction ov eternity.

Would ye believe et, that burro never budged.

My pard looked wild in ther eyes, and he grabbed that Dutcher off and told him to git on right.

By that time, seein' that he was still alive and that ther burro was still alive too but hadn't flopped him, Fritz had a little more sand in his craw, and he obeyed lively.

Up he got again, my pard givin' him a little help same as beforesaid, and that time he got aboard all right.

That seemed to be what ther burro nad been waitin' fer. No sooner was Dutcher straddle ov him than he picked up his ears in a lively fashion, then flirtd his tail, and ther next fraction of a second ther Dutcher went skyward a-kitin'!

You'd 'a' died a laffin', dear reader, ef you had been thar. By ther way, see how much nicer I'm trippin' along sence me and Web, parted company? As ther feller went up he turned a complete summer-sult, right over ther burro's head, and down he kem kerplunk, like a bu'sted punk-in.

That was what et sounded like and hang me fer a fiddler ef I didn't think he was bu'sted fer a fack! Thar was ther burro, as innercent as ary lambkin, and thar was Fritz, all in a bundle like a dumplin', and thar was ther crowd laffin' ready to split their s'penders. And thar was my pard, standin' with his gun ready to enforce more fun.

"That was purty good, Fritz," he complied. "Want ter try et again? I think ye better had."

"Nein! nein!" ther Dutcher bellered. "Ich habe genug! Ich habe es nicht sehr gern! Ich bin in einen Frosch verwandelt! Donner und blitzen! mein backbone must be jammed clear out der crown mein hat, ain't id?"

I suppose my pard would have carried it further, but just then somebody hollered out to git ready for a sack-race that was down on ther program, and my pard put up his gun and guv me ther wink, sayin' that we would have to go inter that, no mistake. We was thar fer fun, or as near to et as we could git.

CHAPTER VII.

WE ENTER A SACK-RACE.

"Cy," said my pard, "this hyer is rich."

"Et's gittin' ripe, Bob," sez I. "But don't ferget ther landlord."

At mention ov that, Bob's jaw dropped a little, and he looked spotted fer a minnit, rollin' one eye to see whar Samson was at.

But he soon recovered, seein' that ther landlord was laffin' ready to bu'st himself and lookin' as harmless as ary kitten—rather a baby elephant, fer he hadn't got no smaller in my sight.

"We'll have ter handle him wi' gloves," said I.

"I leave all that ter you," said Bob. "It was you ordered ther drinks, and he will look to you."

That was onkind ov Bob, but then I knowed he didn't mean et—leastways I thought he didn't. We had been pards too long fer me to think of his goin' back on me like that.

"But et was you told me to," I 'torted.

"That don't matter," said he.

"Sides, you et one of ther dinners," I added.

"I kin heave et up to him, ef he wants

et," said Bob. "I'm 'bout done with et now, anyhow."

"Look out he don't make ye surrender what ye et fer breakfast, too," said I, by way of warnin'. "Ef ye see him tackle me fer pay, don't forget to forbid my payin'," I added.

"Ditto here," said Bob.

We understood.

"And hyer's this hyer burro we promised that yahoo we'd look out fer," I minded.

"That's so, b'gosh!" said Bob. "Hey, landlord, let somebody take this mouse around to ther stables and give et a feed, wull ye? Charge et up with that galoot's dinner and—"

"And I'll pay ye," I flung in.

"Ther doose ye wull!" said Bob.

"That's what I'm-hyer fer," said I.

"We'll see about that," said Bob. "Ye'd know me, landlord!"

Glory! ef he hadn't brass enough to make a brazen serpent, then I'm a liar! And that landlord seemed ter swoller et all at one gulp, fer he ordered a feller to see to ther burro.

I guv him another wink when Bob wasn't lookin', to keep up my end of ther business.

Ther burro was taken off all right.

Right hyer let me say a good word fer that camp ov Hold-up. Ov all ther jolly crowds you ever seen in your life, thar et was. Everybody had had a big dinner, and topped it off with somethin' ticklin', and some had been tickled more'n oncet, by their looks.

They wur bent on havin' a big time, now I'm tellin' ye.

Wull, they got out a lot of big bags, big enough ter hold a mule, they looked ter be, and then a feller hollers:

"Now, then, who enters fer thersack-race? Don't all speak ter oncet, but don't all hang back, either. It's open free to all that comes, and a prize to ther winner!"

"That's me," said Bob.

"Et's me too," said I.

"Hello!" cried ther feller, just then, "hyer's Silly Gilly; he will want a sack, sure-pop! Come along, Gilly, and take yer pick ov ther lot, and be their first galoot in et!"

Ther yahoo had jest come out from dinner, and he had ther most satisfied look on his mug that you ever seen in your born days. His vest was bulgin' so that every button on et was strained to its utmost holdin' power, or looked to be at fu'st blush.

He looked around.

"Whar is Tobias?" he piped.

"We had him taken keer of, same as we promised," said my pard, with a jerk of ther thumb to include me in it.

I had a sneakin'suspicion that he done that because ther landlord was lookin', and I noticed that he said WE in a good round tone, like as if it was writ in big letters to be printed.

"Much 'bliged to ye," said ther fool, with a duck ov ther head at us, "and much 'bliged too fer ther dinner," he tacked on, smackin' his chops and rubbing his belly. "That was ther best feed I ever had in my life, no mistake. If I had my four dollars, now, I'd be happy."

"Never mind ther four dollars," called out ther boss of sarymonies; "we offer a five-dollar prize to ther winner of this hyer race, and you are bound to win et ef ye try hard. Come right along, Gilly, and show ther boys what ye kin do; you ain't no slouch in a race, I'm bettin' hard rocks. That's ther ticket; come right erlong and show these hyer other galoots how ter do et!"

Silly Gilly, grinnin' from ear to ear like a monkey, ambled down and made his pick ov ther bags.

Everybody else grinned ter see him grin.

Mebby et was that five dollars that filled

his eye; but, glory! he hadn't no more show ov winnin' et 'n what I had—not half as much I thought.

No matter; he got into his sack, and that feller tied et close up around his neck jist under ther ears, and thar he was, nice as you please, but what sort of a run he was goin' to make I couldn't see.

I half backed out, on ther spot.

But my pard didn't; oh, no! That wasn't You-bet's style. He would 'a' gone in et ef it had cost him a leg.

He made his pick of ther sacks and got into et, and then he looked around ter see what I was doin', and seein' that I hadn't made a move yet, he hollered out at me:

"What's ther matter, Cy? Not backin' out, I hope? Git a go on ye, and git yer sack before they ar' all taken! Think of that five dollars!"

That was the last straw, so ter speak; I thought of et, and went fer my sack. That seemed ter break the ice fer the rest of 'em, sorter like, and there was then a general scramble to git one of ther things.

I s'pose thar was a good round fifty of 'em, mebbly more and mebbly less, and when they all got filled I tell ye et was a sightly sight ter see. I felt more or less 'shamed ov myself, in mine, and wanted ter go and hide my head. If I could pulled et down through ther pucker-string ov that sack, I'd 'a' done et quicker!

Bob looked at me and larft right out. I larft at him, too, out ov 'venge fer his laffin'.

"Cy," said he, "d'ye know what you look like?"

"I reckon I look like you," said I.

"Wull, said he, "ef I look like you do I won't mention et, nohow. I was goin' to say you look like the devil!"

"I can't say," said I, "not havin' his 'quaintance."

"And I don't want et, ef he looks any wuss'n you do," was what he 'torted at me.

"How d'ye feel?" he 'quired.

"Sort o' pucker'd," said I.

"I don't know nothin' 'bout that feelin'," said I.

"Wull, et's like you feel natchurly," said he. "I notice et 'cause et's new to me."

"I'd bang yer eye," said I, "ef I had ther use of my mawlies."

"Lucky fer ye that ye ain't, then," said he.

That way we bantered while the master jigger of ther 'casion was formin' ther racers in line, and at last he had us all ready, straight as a string, and then he told us to git ready.

I was about as ready as I'd ever be, I reckoned.

Bob looked even more so, 'specially behind ther ears, whar he looked some spotted.

"Now, then, when I count ten," said ther boss, and he began ter count in a slow, straight, steady tone that made me think of every evil deed that I had ever done in my life.

Seemed to me as if we was all stood up thar to be shot at.

"Go!"

Ther word kem like a thunderbolt, fer all we was waitin' fer et, and et fairly parrylized me fer a second.

Thar I stood, like ary blame fool, while all ther rest went off like a lot o' skart jack rabbits, and as soon as I got my grit I started too, but I didn't go a great long ways, I'm tellin' ye.

Ye see, I hadn't never tried that sort ov thing before, and didn't know anything about et, and I forgot ther sack and tried to run in ther usual fashion, but it wouldn't work! Over I went, and scooped up a barrel o' gravel wi' my lower jaw while my nose plowed et loose, jest ahead. But, I wasn't alone at that business, not by several, you bet!

CHAPTER VIII.

MY PARD GETTIN' THAR.

I HAD enough, right at ther start.

I let out a yell like a bellerin' bull, soon's I had unloaded that cart-load ov gravel I spoke about.

Seemed to me as if about a ton ov it had gone right on down into my stummick, too. I wanted to wipe my mouth and feel to see how much I was damaged, but thar I was in that blame bag!

Thar wur more like me.

"Let me out ov heer!" I hollered, rip-roarin' mad.

"Why didn't ya yump?" asked that Swede feller, Nels Borgson was his name, as I had learnt.

"Jump ther dickens!" I yelled at him. "How could a feller jump, or do anything else, tied up in a bag like ary blame turkey won at a raffle? Will ye let me go loose?"

"Sure Aa wull," said ther Swede, makin' fer that knot in ther strink as ef et was his own tyin'. "And as to how tha yump, look at 'em a yumpin' now. Look at that paard av yours! Aa bet he will win the race, af he keeps it up at that pace. He is a yumper!"

I was lookin', to ther best of my 'bility, considerin' the blindin' tears that was in my eyes, and thar they was a goin' et like a flock of kangaroos, bobbin' and bobbin', and every now and then one bobbin' his last bob and makin' his last flop just about the same time as I had done at ther start. What I was lookin' fer was to git sight of my pard Bob.

Purty soon I discovered him, well ahead in the front line, and he was goin' into et fer all he was worth. Close behind him was Silly Gilly, as I took et to be, and he was doin' some tall jumpin', too.

By that time ther Swede had got me untied, and he helped me out of ther sack, and soon's I wiped a bushel ov bowlders out ov my eyes, I could see better.

It was a sight, now, I'm yaupin'.

The ground looked like a field o' battle, after ther battle was over, 'cept that none of ther corpus was'n lyin' still, but all was makin' ther blamest scramble you ever seen to git on their pins.

Did ye ever see a lot ov Dutch sassages, ther hand-made article, and see about a dozen pounds ov 'em, more or less, spilled all over ther floor? Wull, that was about what them sack racers looked like out thar on ther ground, 'cept as I said, that they was all in moshun.

But, ther race? That is ther thing you're supposed to be interested in, dear reader, sure enough.

You see, I can't hardly divorce my own feelin's in ther matter from ther straight retail of ther facts as they happened, and hence you will have to bear with me and take the story part as it comes.

Thar I was, nose skinned, lower teeth almost dislocated scoopin' up that car load ov gravel I spoke about, and otherwise damaged to a liberal extent more or less, and I reckon it was considerable more, if my recollection serves me right, and I don't think it is playin' me any trick.

Thar was Bob, bobbin' along at a great canter, and next to him was that fool Silly Gilly, jumpin' fer all he was worth, that five dollars no doubt fillin' his eye as big as a barrel. But, speakin' of that, I'll bet it filled my pard's eye as big as that landlord of ther Grand Central Hotel was fillin' mine, to say nothin' of his weight on my mind.

"Cl'ar ther road thar!" Bob was a-yellin'. "Hyar I come, ther great jumpin' hyenner of ther jumpin' jim-cracks! Cl'ar ther road!"

Thar wasn't nobody in his road, and he was haff-way to ther end.

"He's a yumper, no mistook!" exclaimed that Swede to me.

"And that darn yahoo ain't no slouch, nuther," said I, with my eyes on him—that

Ther landlord looked at me, over ther heads ov ther crowd, and I felt myself wither to nothin'ness under his eye.

Seein' that I was in fer it, though, I put on a good sight better front than I felt, and bellered out again fer ther crowd to git out of my path and leave me a wide swath.

Mebby that false front loomed up tall, but ef they could 'a' looked at my stack ov courage from a rear view they would have beheld a structure that was all front and nothin' else; a delusion and a mockery as it wur.

"What d'ye want?" ther landlord asked.

"Ther best ye have got," I answered, slashin' right to ther front with my burden, shovin' men right and left regardless, as if et was real life and death in grim earnest.

I reached ther bar, and thar I dropped my pard on ther floor all in a lump, with a diz-mul thud.

Ther landlord handed out a bottle, and right thar I made a mistake.

I thought ov myself first, ye see.

Yankin' out ther cork, I throwed back my head, jammed ther bottle 'tween my teeth, and let 'er flicker.

Et didn't flicker long, I'm tellin' ye. Et was benzine, ther pure stuff, used fer cleanin' purposes, that ther landlord had got holt ov by mistake, and I had got a gullick full ov it.

"Reaouch eaouch-aouch!" I heaved, or somehow similar, and that dose shot out ov me and across ther bar like a belch from Castle Geyser in Fire Hole Basin, ef ye have ever seen that, and I was that mad that I flung ther bottle straight at that landlord's head.

My heart quailed within me ther same instant, when I realized what I had done, but et was done. Ther bottle bu'sted about haff a dozen others on a shelf, and went plump through a lookin' glass, and I thought that would be my last hour on yarth, but when I got my narve steady enough ter look at that landlord you kin boot me ef he wasn't pale—actool fack!

I knowed I was in fer et anyhow, so I whipped out my gun and took a bead on him, tremblin' in my boots at ther same time.

"What in misery do ye mean by handin' out that stuff ter me?" I rumbled at him in terrible basso. "Did ye want ter put out ther last bit o' flickerin' life my pard has got. Fer one cent I would blow ther hull crown ov yer head off!"

In that way I showed up that false front ov mine in lurid red and yaller, while inwardly I was fairly shiverin' with fear lest he might look black at me; but he didn't; he continued to look white, fer which I was dooly thankful. He offered a mumbled 'pollyjy, handed out another bottle, and fer ther time bein' thar was no blood spilt, altho' I knowed it war brewin' in the air.

CHAPTER X.

SOMETHIN' OV A RUCTION.

My pard just then guv a fetchin' moan.

I knowed what he was moanin' about, but I let him wait a minute.

Lucky fer him that I had sampled that other bottle first, or he would been full ov benzine.

Takin' ther new bottle, which was lightnin' fer sure, I took a mouthful ov it to rensh out with, swoshin' it around in my jowler and then sprayin' it out like a heathin Chineese sprinklin' clothes, only more so.

That done, I took a snifter, mebbe three fingers—bottle measure, and et took away ther taste of that first horrible dose. Then I stooped and administered et to my pard, jammin' ter ther neck ov ther bottle down his gullick clean up to ther hub and lettin' et gurgle.

I done that part fer 'venge fer the dose I had got.

You-bet kem to, lightnin' quick, under

that treatment, and tried ter squirm away, but I held him thar a second and nearly drowned him, I reckon.

Only that he was in that sack, I opine he would 'a' shot me dead on ther spot, but thar he was, helpless, and I had him at my mercy. But, I wouldn't hurt Bob for rocks, you bet!

I let right up and rolled him over, grabbin' him under ther middle with my lift arm and liftin' him part clear and poundin' him on ther back with my right hand in a way kalkylated to clear his lungs, and as soon as he got so's he could holler I stopped.

"You gol-goshed loonytick!" he yauped. "What yer tryin' ter do? Let me out ov this hyer bag, and see if I don't scour ther distant plains with yer kerkiss! I'm a howlin' hyenner ef I don't chaw ye when I do git free! You have near about drowned me, that's what ye have done, and I'll pay ye up fer et, don't you fergit et! Give me that bottle!"

"Take et easy, Bobbert," said I. "I was nervous, that was all."

"You'll be more nervous, blast ye!" said he.

"My nerve is gittin' all right," said I.

"I'll make et righter," said he.

"Take a snack," said I.

With that I put ther bottle to his lips, gentle-like, and he sipped et off like a sucklin' babe, or a bee samplin' ther dew on a rose petal—Thar, I won't go further on that trail, dear reader; I ain't often taken that way. Let's amble on. He gulped what he wanted; then I took another dip at et, and I put ther empty bottle back on ther bar.

Glory! Thar was that landlord with a gun pointed straight at me.

"Pony," said he.

That false front ov mine went down all in a heap ov quiverin' ruins, and ther false supports behind showed plain.

"D-d-d-don't shoot!" I managed ter gasp, somethin' after ther fashion ov that Swede I have been tellin' ye about. "Wh-wh-what's ther damage? Put et all in one bill."

"Yes, put ther hull thing in a lump," hollered my pard, from ther floor, still snug in his sack.

Then I seen that I had put my foot in et.

Bob was goin' back on me, was goin' ter leave me ter face ther music alone, and I imagined myself already dead and buried a dozen feet deep more or less, mebbe ten feet or so less.

Nevertheless, I had to carry on ther bluff to ther last second, so I put in strong like:

"All in one lump, sartain! What d'ye s'pose, that I would pay haff? Not me, b'gosh! I have got you whar I want ye, now, pard, and I am goin' ter settle this hyer score."

Same time I got my foot on his neck in my 'citement and closed down plenty hard on it.

"That's what you are," said ther landlord.

"Pony!"

I went down into my pocket, and down onto Bob's neck still harder at ther same time, but somehow Bob had got his arms out ov that sack and he grabbed me by ther leg and down I went on ther floor.

"I'll show ye who is goin' ter pay ther bill!" he yauped at me. "And I'll show ye whose neck you have been usin' fer a blasted footstool, too!" and he made a gouge at my optics and et looked as ef he meant biz, but I wronged him when I thought so.

He was as much interested in keepin' our secret as I was, if I had only stopped ter reason et out, and he couldn't go back on me ef he wanted to. He made a bite at my ear, but whispered:

"Fight, Cy, ye durn fool, fight! but not in earnest; we must shut his eye again!"

I gripped on, then; and I tell ye we had et cat and dog over that floor for ther space ov two or three minutes, and then we pulled apart and each one ov us pulled a gun.

That howlin' crowd had formed a ring around us, but at ther sight ov ther guns they scattered like chaff 'fore a stiff breeze, and thar was me and Bob alone ter continner ther contest to our likin', and ther landlord lookin' on sort ov helpless in 'mazement.

"Cy," panted my pard, "I am goin' to pay ther bill."

"Bob," I panted back, "I am goin' to pay ther bill myself."

"You ain't," said he.

"I am," said I.

Thar we war, deadlocked.

"You will both pay et," spoke up ther landlord, who still had his gun in his fist.

"No we won't," said Bob.

"That's right," said I. "It's me or nobody."

"Somebody has got ter pay, and that right down spot ducats," declared ther landlord, and he was beginnin' ter grow big ergain in my sight. I thought I had reduced him, but I hadn't; he was a giant still.

"Bob," said I, "let me pay this bill and have done with et. You kin pay ther next one."

I guv him a wink.

"Et hits me that he is gettin' troubled about his money," said Bob, cold like, and he guv me a wink. "I have a noshun ter make you wait fer et, Mr. Landlord. Do ye think we haven't got ther stuff?"

"I haven't seen ther color ov et yet," said he.

"Then I'll show ye," said I, and I made a reach.

"No ye won't!" cried Bob at me. "Ef he is goin' ter insult a couple ov Cross Crick gentlemen that way, let him wait till night fer his dust."

"Does he think that we would come hyer from Cross Crick fer a day's fun, with nothin' in our pockets ter have fun on?" I follered his lead. "Landlord, my pard takes ther right view of the matter to my way ov thinkin', and I second his moshun. You will have ter wait."

We had ther bulge on him, too.

He had a gun in hand, that was so, but thar was the crowd and he wouldn't dared ter shoot that direction.

Thar was nobody behind him, and we both turned the noses of our guns his way and let him look into ther tubes. He took water, thar bein' no way out of et, but he took et graceful.

"Well, boys, mebbe I was hasty," he observed, puttin' away his gun. "But I was out ov temper."

"So was I," said I. "You hadn't orter have a blame cent, settin' out real benzine 'fore a gentleman—specially one that knows ther difference."

"It was a mistake, stranger; don't see how that bottle ever got on ther shelf. But I have had a big rush to-day, ye know, and that must 'count fer it. Here, come and take one with me to make et right."

He sot out ther best he had, and I felt cheap as dirt.

I could 'a' fell on his collar and wept my 'fection, almost. If I had had ther dust in my clothes I would 'a' squared ther damage then and thar.

But I hadn't et; neither had Bob, and so we had ter stiffen our necks wi' indignashun and make him humble himself 'fore us, which he did ample, considerin' that we was into him some dollars.

In ther mean time—thar had been considerable of it by now, that plumb loonytick, Silly Gilly, had treated ther crowd with ther fiver he had won, and he was no better off'n he was in ther first place. Ther citizens ov Hold-up war cute; they didn't mean ter let that fiver git out ov town.

By ther time ther citement was over some, and everybody had got their hog's feathers smoothed down ther right way ergain, et was announced that ther time fer ther next

event ov ther day was at hand, and me and Bob pranced out ter learn what et was goin' ter be. We was gettin' ripe by that time, Bob and me was, and we was in fer anything that was on ther carpet, no matter what it might be. There's no flies on me and Bob when we go bobbin', you bet!

CHAPTER XI.

MY PARD AS UMPIRE.

WULL, we went out, as I said, and I tell ye we wuz feelin' good by that time and beginnin' ter step high.

We had a hull bottle ov Samson's best inside ov us, 'cept what I swoshed out with and what Bob couldn't hold ther first dose I guv him, so why wouldn't we step high?

Before night we stepped higher'n that!

As we went out, that fool ov a Silly Gilly nugged up to us and said:

"I want to thank ye ergain fer that dinner; et was good; ther best I ever et in my life."

"You are jest as much 'bliged as ef et was paid fer," said my pard. "You hadn't better go ter blowin' 'round about et, for that landlord has got a morgy on ye and he may foreclose."

"What does that mean?" asked ther fool, his eyes bulgin' out like ther eyes ov a frog.

"Et means that he will cut ye open to git what belongs to him," said my pard.

That feller looked skart, now I'm tellin' ye.

"But, you are goin' to pay, ain't ye?" he inquired, sort o' feeble like.

"Gilly," said I, to help my pard along, "we couldn't pay fer ther tooth-pick yer topped off with, let alone ther fodder."

"But don't ye breathe et," said my pard. "Ef ye do, down comes yer tabernacle ov clay, and don't you forgit et. That landlord will open ye and scrape yer inner parts but what he'll have what's due him."

"N-n-n-no, I won't tell," said ther fool.

"By the way," said my pard.

"What is et?"

"You said you was goin' ter git your four dollars back ag'in, didn't ye?"

"Yes, that's what I said, and I said what I meant, too. I looked at that robber p'tic'lar close, and I would know him in a crowd."

"Well, ef you happen to run up against him, jest git our money back ergain, too, will ye? He has got a couple ov hundred ov our hard earned dornicks about his clothes."

"Sho! did he stop you too?"

"Yas; but tell et not in Gath nor herald et from ther housetops. You make him disgorge, and we'll stand ther brunt fer your dinner."

"I'll do et, by goshety I will!" ther fool promised.

Fools promise anything.

Me and Bob laughed right hearty at that, and ther fool went on his way rejoicin' ter think that his dinner was safe.

Wull, ther thing then on ther carpet was a baseball match, and they was scoutin' 'round lively to find somebody to umpire ther business. Nobody seemed willin' ter do et.

"Bob," said I.

"Wull," said he.

"You be umpire," I asks.

"Better wait till they ask me," he opined.

We didn't have ter wait more'n a month or two, when a feller rushed up sayin':

"Say, can't you two gents act as umpires? No-one here seems willin' to do it, and the game must go on."

"Anything in et?" my pard asks, in a business way.

"Lots," sez ther feller; "lots!"

"How many hard rocks?" I asked him.

"Well, ten dollars apiece to you when the game is done," he give out.

"We're your game chickens at that figger," said my pard, right prompt out.

"Come along, Cy."

"But, pard," I whispered, "I don't know

ther rules of ther game, and I'll only make a mess of ther hull business and git us into further trouble."

"Never mind about that," said my pard. "Think ov them ten hard rocks at ther end. Mebby not another galoot in ther hull batch knows anything about rules, either, and ef they don't like our style let 'em say so."

I hadn't any fear but what they would; I opined they would make et plenty plain to us.

Well, that feller went off bawlin' out that he had found umpires, ther two gents from Cross Crick, and a rousin' cheer went up fer me and my pard.

That feller, by ther way, was a slick-lookin' chap, and was 'gaged to ther purty darter ov ther manager of one of ther best mines thar at Hold-up. Ther weddin' was ter come off that night. That, by ther way, was to be ther crownin' 'vent ov ther hull day's sport, and everybody was gittin' in trim fer et.

But no matter 'bout that.

Ther players was men picked from two of ther mines, reglar ruffs ther most ov 'em, red shirts and big boots and knives and guns and all to match.

Wull, we stepped out thar and faced ther music, and one ov ther captains rushed up to us, a great big whiskered feller, lookin' turrible enough to eat us both, and he bellered:

"Fair game, now, or look out fer me!"

Then up rushed another rooster ov about ther same caliber, minus ther hair on his face, and he hollers:

"Fair biz, or you'll hear from me!"

I noticed that my pard was gittin' spotted, more so on account of ther fermentin' evil he had inside, and he opens his bazoo and hollers back at them both in a way that he what run might hear, sayin':

"And you two 'tend to your biz, straight, and don't you meddle with our'n, or thar will be trouble right on ther jump!"

They glowered at him, sort ov sizin' him up.

"Oh! thar's two ov us," I hollered out, feelin' ruther good then, "and what we don't know about baseball ain't worth knowin', you bet! Ef we are goin' to umpire we don't want no help."

"That's a square chunk ov premium horse sense," said my pard.

"All we ask is a square deal," said both them fellers together. "That is all we expect. But, we expect all ov that," they said singly and individually right on top ov it, "and ef we don't git et we are goin' to know ther reason why. Do you git onto that?"

"We don't want no help," my pard reminded.

"Play ball!" I bellered.

They hadn't got ready yet, but that sort ov put some go in 'em, and after they had almost come to a fight over which side should come first to bat, they finally got into their posishuns.

"Are ye ready?" my pard asked 'em.

They said they wuz.

"Then let 'er go!" yelled You-bet, and ther trouble began.

By ther redness ov ther pitcher's face, I judged that he had been hittin' ther bottle purty hard, and when he slammed in ther ball I was sure ov it. He missed ther home-plate by about ten yards, and sent ther ball plumb center into ther crowd on ther left.

"Foul!" yells my pard, instanter.

"What's that?" hollers ther whiskered feller.

"I called et a foul," my pard answered back at him.

"Why, you durn lunk," he 'torted, "the bat never touched et!"

"Foul all ther same," said my pard, and no amount ov kickin' would make him change his decision. He allowed et wasn't fair, anyhow, and ef et wasn't fair it must be a foul.

Well, ther ball got back into ther pitcher's hands somehow, and he slammed et in again, and this time et went so high that ther batter couldn't touched et with a clothes-prop. It went so fur in ther rear, too, that a boy had ter be sent to hunt et up.

"Foul!" my pard yelled again, like an Injun.

"You call that a foul?" yelled ther whiskers. "What do ye mean by et?"

"I mean et's a foul," bellered my pard. "Ef et ain't a fair it can't be anything else. Play ball!"

"No, we won't play ball, nuther!" declared ther whiskers, and he marched up to my pard with a gun in his fist. "Say, do you know ther difference 'tween a foul and a ball, anyhow?"

"What durn fool don't know that?" yaup-ed my pard.

"Well, do you?" urged ther whiskers.

"Of course I do."

"Well, what is ther difference?"

"What is ther difference?"

"Yes, out with et, if you know!" hollered ther whiskers.

"Wull, a ball is a ball, and a foul has wings and a tail," bellered my pard. "Play ball, you Gila monsters! Play ball!"

CHAPTER XII.

ARIZONA BASE-BALL.

But, they didn't play ball right away—not that kind, anyhow.

They kum purty clus to havin' a ball ov another kind, but missed et by a notch or two.

"Hold on!" yelled that feller with ther whiskers. "We ain't ready ter play ball jest yit. You think you aire somebody, 'cause you happen ter come from Cross Crick, but you don't know et all."

"I don't kalkylate you kin give me any lessons," said my pard, brash as if he did know et all fer a fact. "When I make a say-so, that say-so has got to stand. See? When I say play ball, that is what I mean. I'm hired to be umpire here, me and my pard, and ef we can't be that we won't be nothin'!"

Ther whiskers sort ov cooled a little, fer he didn't want ter lose us. It had been hard enough ter find any one who would tackle ther job at all.

"Wull, don't git riled," he said, softer.

"When ther ball goes wild, that is a ball; when et comes near, but ther batter don't hit et, whether he strikes at et or not, that is a strike; and when ther ball tips ther bat, but drops outside ther lines, that is a foul. See? Nothin' else is a foul but that. Now do you understand ther play?"

My pard looked as if he didn't understand a blame thing on earth, and had fergotten what little he ever did know.

"Is that ther way ye play ball over here?" he asked.

"That's jist ther way," said ther whiskers.

"All right; play ball!"

That diffikilty adjusted, ther pitcher slugged et in once more, and blame me ef he didn't plunk my pard fair and square in ther bread-basket!

You-bet doubled up like a jackknife and went to ther ground all in a heap, huggin' himself in a way most affectin', and as he went down he let out a awful beller from his bazoo.

"Foul!" he hollers, "and ther man what says et ain't is a liar!"

"Strike!" hollered him ov ther whiskers.

"Do et ef ye dare!" hollers my pard, in mortal agony, rollin' over and over. "Et ain't no fair ter hit a man when he's down!"

"Ball!" yelled somebody else.

"I'll make that blasted ijjit bawl, when I git my wind!" bellered my pard, full ov vengeance.

"We want another umpire," hollered ther captain that hadn't whiskers. "We can't

wait fer him to git well, and he don't know ther rules, anyhow."

"Try Silly Gilly," some feller suggested.

"Jest ther man!"

"You bet!"

"Hello, Gilly! Come out hyer and show yerself, and shed yer wisdom onto this game!"

And that blame fool had ther brash ter come out smilin' to tackle ther job, spite ov ther fact that my pard had jest been laid on ther shelf.

"Is it ten dollars?" he asked.

"Yes, it's ten dollars," said ther whiskers.

"No, I'm blamed ef et is!" bellered my pard. "I have got a morgy on that ten dollars, fer damages received."

But ther rooters rooted so loud that he couldn't be heard, so he had to pull out and leave ther matter to me and that ijgit. I didn't like et, but thar I was and that tenner filled my eye.

"Play ball!" piped up ther fool.

And they done so, the pitcher drivin' in another one that fairly made ther wind whistle.

Spat! said ther bat, and ther ball went scrapin' ther sky away off in ther direction of ther Gila, seemed to me, but then I was secin' things a little distorted, owin' to bal-last.

And then ther batter started to make his bases, and not only him but ther hull blasted nine ov 'em, one after another, tight as they could go it. Never seen a game ov ball out here in Arryzona, have ye, dear reader? Well, it's a sort of go-as-ye-please affair, you bet!

Now I had seen ball played, and knowed jest a little about et, and I hollerer fer all I was worth, but et wasn't no use. I couldn't be heard above ther noise made by that crowd.

Ther ball had gone clean over 'gainst ther side ov ther hill, less'n a thousand miles away, and every man on the other side, 'cept one or two, had gone ter look fer et, and ther nine men went prancin' around them bases in a way to kill. In kem one, then another, then another, and every blame one of 'em hollerer "Tally!"

Well, they scored nine runs before that ball got around to attend to biz again.

"Is that ther way ye play ball over heer?" said I, when they got quiet.

"That's jist ther way," said ther whiskers.

I was on ther p'int ov tellin' him that I didn't think he needed any umpire at all, and throwin' up ther sponge, but that tenner filled my eye, and I thought I would stay in fer a spell longer.

I was sorry I did.

T'other side took 'ceptions to that kind ov playin', somebody knowin' et wasn't jist reg'lar, and thar was a pow-wow.

Ther first thing I knowed them two captains had holt ov me and was tryin' to pull me apart, and each ov 'em had a gun poked in my face, and their eyes wur clean full ov shoot.

"Decision!" hollerer one.

"Decision!" hollerer t'other.

And thar I was, like a bone ov corntension, likely to be devoured ov 'em both and satisfy in' neither.

"One run," I managed to git out, fer they was pullin' and haulin' so that it was hard fer me to work my jaw to say anything, and I was sorry I had worked et even that much.

"Nine runs!" hollerer whiskers. "Make et nine, or I'm a white livered gorilla ef I don't spatter yer brains all over ther Terry-tory!"

"Nine et is," I assented, soon as I could chatter et out.

"You said one!" hollerer no-whiskers, jammin' his gun half-way through my breast-bone. "Stick to your decision, or I'm a ring-grizzled cattymount ef I don't make dead meat ov ye!"

"One run," I failed to mention.

"Nine!" hollerer whiskers, jammin' his gun 'tween my fifth and sixth ribs about two inches and a quarter. "Nine or die!"

And thar I was!

Dear reader, what would you've done about et? Be kind enough to 'magine yerself in my place jest about then, and write me a letter about it—Arizona Cy, care ov ther publisher, and et will come all right. I'd like ye to tell me. Ther fact ov ther matter was, I was stumped, and I reckon they would make cold meat ov me ef my pard hadn't chipped in just then propishously.

"Call in t'other up umpire," he hollerer out. "Call in t'other umpire, and see what he has ter say."

That broke ther deadlock fer a second, and they looked around fer ther fool. He was standin' out thar as onkuncerned as if thar wasn't a matter ov life and death under discussion.

He was dragged into ther melee two jerks ov a jiffy, and his opinion was demanded about as urgent as mine had been.

"No runs," he decided, prompt enough.

That settled et. It almost settled him, too. They dropped me and went fer him to argy ther matter, and me and Bob mingled with ther crowd and lost ourselves to sight ez et wur.

They swore at him, they jammed their guns inter him, they did everything but hang him on ther spot, but still he stuck to that et was no runs.

"What d'ye mean?" thunderer ther whiskers.

"Foul ball," ther ijgit piped.

How they howled!

"Et went outside," said ther ijgit; and he stuck to in sech a way that they finally agreed to disagree on et and wipe out ther score and begin all over again.

T'other side took ther bat, then, and ther agony went on.

In about ten minutes thar was a fight in which both sides got mingled up in sech a way that you couldn't tell t'other from which, and guns was poppin' in a way to make ye think et was Fourth of July or tharabouts. There was music in the air, I'm tellin' ye. When et was over there was enough wounded men to set up a hospital with, and lucky no one had been killed outright. Oh! it was a red-hot holiday, same as they had advertised, you bet! Me and Bob had took safe retreat behind a rain bar'l, whar we remained till the shower—ov lead—was over.

CHAPTER XIII.

FINDIN' A BONANZA.

You might think that would ov settled ther fun fer ther day.

Oh, no; it was only gettin' ripe, 'bout that time, and ther fellers that had got hit wasn't hardly missed.

They crawled off to their wicky-ups to get their holes plugged and other damages repaired, and in ther meantime ther band played right on, so ter put et in a way figgery.

That is ther way we do things out here, 'speshully on a holiday.

Somebody said drink about that period, too, and away ther hull multytod flocked to ther Grand Central Hotel, me and Bob in ther van.

Thar they blowed in a big chunk ov ther money that was to 'a' gone to ther umpires, but that made no difference so long as everybody was happy, and that game ov ball was voted a big success.

Ther next thing, so we learned, was to be a try at climbin' a greased pole, and that promised to be rich.

"Bob," said I, "are you goin' to try et?"

"I dunno, Cy," explained Bob. "Are you?"

"Don't think I will," and I spoke as I meant it.

"Why not?" he 'quired.

"Et will spoil my store clothes," I 'splained.

"That's right," said Bob. "That is what I was thinkin' about, myself. I'll tell ye what, Cy."

"What is et?"

"One ov us kin do et, t'other watchin' his clothes."

"Not naked!" I hollerer.

"Sartain not!" he hollerer. "I kin git a rig ov old overalls from somebody, no doubt. And, by ther way," whisperin' in my ear, "et will be a good way to 'courage ther land-lord."

"How's that?" I asked.

"We'll talk whar he kin hear, and I'll be as p'ticlar as ary old maid in ther care you are to take ov my duds and dust."

That idee made me larf right out.

"All right," said I. "I am with ye."

We worked around to whar ther landlord could hear, and Bob sez:

"Cy, I have a blame mind ter try that greased pole business myself. What do ye say?"

"Do et ef ye want to," says I, speakin' right out. "I don't want none in mine."

"Wull, I have, honest," said he. "Will you hold my clothes?"

"Shur," said I, "if you're fool enough to try it."

"And you will take good care ov my wad?"

"Why not?" I asks. "You kin trust me, I guess, Bob Horner. I ain't ary thief or dead-beat, am I—say?"

"Oh, yer know I didn't mean nothin' like that, Cy Johnson," said he. "I meant would ye mind what ye was doin' and not drop-my money out ov ther pockets? That was all."

Ther landlord was givin' 'tention to our remarks, I could see from ther corner ov my off eye, and he seemed ter look satisfied that we had ther rocks to put up when we seen fit ter settle with him fer drink, dinner and damages. He didn't know how foxy we wuz.

"Do I look like a born fool?" said I.

"Not quite," said Bob.

"Wull, then, I guess I kin take keer ov your money," I 'torted at him. "You won't have a cent less'n you have got now, when I hand yer clothes back to ye. Ef you want to climb ther pole, go ahead and climb 'er."

"Yas, but see hyer," he chuckled.

"Wull, what now?" I jist wished to be informed.

"You will sneak up and pay ther landlord our bill while I am out ov sight, and I won't be in et, after all, you see," he had the cheek to assert.

"Mebby I will," said I, evasively-like.

"Jest what I thort I read in yer eye," said Bob.

"Sech was my 'good intent," I lied like sin, ter carry on my part ov ther skeem.

"Then I don't climb no pole," said Bob.

"Then ye don't."

Jest at that minnit we heard et said that thar was a prize ov fifty bones to ther man that could reach ther top ov ther pole.

My pard's eyes went open like wild, hearin' that.

"Cy, I have got ter climb et," he said.

"But, I can't unless you will help me."

"How kin I help ye?" I asked him.

"By swearin' that ye won't pay ther land-lord while I am tryin' et."

I p'tended ter look blue over that, and I took a sly look at ther landlord ter see how he was takin' et.

He ketched me at et, that time, and he nodded his head. He felt dead sure now that we wuz all right, and that was ther proof ov et. We had licked him down fine at last.

"Wull, Bob, ter give ye a chance, I'll do et," I come down.

"Put up yer right hand," said he.

"If ye say so," said I, and I put et up.
 "Now say after me," called out Bob, "I do sw'ar, by all ther gods ov war, that I won't in no wise and no how offer ter pay ther landlord ov this hyer shebang what is due him while my pard is, so ter say, not in et."

I repeated et after him, and I tell ye I never took my oath with a clearer conscience in my hull life. Pay him? Bless ye, I couldn't 'a' paid fer ther stopper out ov ther bottles!

"That is dead right, now," and Bob seemed jest high pleased. "I know I kin trust ye, after ye have taken oath to a thing. You heard ther 'greement, landlord?"

"Yes; that will be all right," said Samson.

"Shur et will."

Weil, ther 'citement was on again by that time, and all that was goin' to try ther pole was gittin' ready fer et.

"Who has got a suit ov old overalls?" bellered my pard.

"I kin fix ye out," said ther landlord.

"Bully fer you!" said Bob.

Ther landlord opened a closet and took out a rig that he used himself fer dirty work, and which was about on its last legs anyhow, and them he handed to my pard.

"Step right down suller," he said, "and you kin change in no time."

Bob took 'em.

"Come on, Cy," he said to me. "You will have ter see that I'm hooked up all right."

"Lead on," said I.

He led, and I follered. It was somethin' ov a dirty hole, that suller, but thar was room, when we could see ourselves in et.

My pard took off his store duds and put on ther overalls and jumper, and by that time we could see around ther suller plenty plain, and Bob spied a bar'l in one corner.

"A bar'l!" sez he.

"Shur!" said I.

Two steps was all Bob needed ter git thar. He looked et over, felt around ther head, and then he whispers:

"Et's tapped, too, by glory!"

"That's all I want ter know," said I.

Bob got right down on his hands and knees and put his mouth to the jigger and turned on ther flush.

I heard a gurglin', and the most satisfied grunt I ever heard a hog make in my life. I thought Bob would never let go, and in fact he didn't till I giv him a kick.

"Don't make a blame hog ov yerself!" I had to suggest.

"Thar's enough fer both," explained Bob.

"D'ye think I could drink a bar'l ov et?"

"Wull, I want my haff, anyhow," I opined; and then I got down about ther same as Bob had done and took leetle taste ov ther stuff, and mebbly he heard a grunt same as I did; I won't say.

Wull, we didn't tarry long, fearin' that ther snap would be discovered and we wouldn't git another whack at et, but went right up, and I had Bob's clothes tucked under my arm fer safe keepin', his money and all—I might lose ther clothes, but not ther mun.

We wuz feelin' good, I'm tellin' ye, and I reckon we was steppin' knee-high every step we took.

Bob was just spotted with pure joyishness.

CHAPTER XIV.

CLEAR OUT OF SIGHT.

"Now fer that pole!" hollerer my pard.

"Whar is et?"
 Yer know et costs a dollar to enter—ef ye don't know I'll tell ye, when ther prize is a big one.

Bob and me orter 'a' thought ov that, but we didn't. Et never entered our heads till

ther master ov sarymonies 'miuded my pard ov et, jest after Bob made his yaup.

"Put up yer dollar," sez he.

"My dollar?" sez Bob, and I tell ye he wasn't a leopard jest then, fer he changed his spots in about ther twinklin' ov an eye.

"Yer dollar, shur," said ther feller. "Ther prize is a big one, and ther climbers has got to ante ter come in, ye see. Pony up yer dollar, now, and git in line with ther rest; the quicker ther better."

"Here," I hollerer out, jammin' my hand inter my pocket, "I'll put up ther stuff fer him."

"No yer don't!" cried Bob, turnin' on me quick, as I knowed he would.

"What's ther reason I won't?" said I.

"Cause your money ain't no good hyer, that's reason enough," snorted my pard. "Ain't I told ye so enough?"

"Then I'll pony up your'n," said I, makin' as if ter unroll his duds.

"No, hold on," hollers Bob. "You'll mebbly spill ther things out ov all my pockets. Landlord," turnin' to him with ther gall ov ary ox, "put up that dollar fer me and charge et to my 'count."

"Wi' pleasure," said ther 'bligin' giant, "and hyer et is."

He shoved up a dollar like a man, and my heart begun ter beat oncet more. It had been standin' still ther meanwhile.

Bob took ther hull thing as a matter ov course, and acted as if he had a morgy on ther hull shebang. I expected ter hear him say he owned et before ther day was done.

He was gittin' brassy, no mistake.

I noted, too, that he was beginnin' ter wobble a trifle when he walked. I wondered how my own gait was.

"Wull, now fer ther sarcus!" hollerer my pard. "Trot out yer greased pole and put ther saddle on et, and ef I can't ride ther critter et will be a funny thing."

"Bob," said I, "ye climb et, not ride et."

"Who is doin' this?" he bellerer.

"You won't, I opine," said I.

"I'll show ye," and out he pranced, me follerin' with his clothes tucked under my armas aforesaid.

Thar was ther pole, sure enough. It was a flag pole, but row et shone like ary stick ov candy, so shiny et was with grease, and ther minnit I seen et I shook my head.

Ther line was formin', and at ther head wes that nigger I have mentioned somewheres back on this trail, whose name was Thomas Jefferson Jones, but who was called Jeff fer short; and next to him was ther Swede, Nels Borgson. Then kem three or four more, and then my pard and after him was Silly Gilly.

He was goin' fer that fifty, too.

Ther line formed fast, fer that fifty was somethin' worth tryin' fer in these days ov hard times and short rations.

Purty soon ther feller in charge hollerer that ther time wuz up, and told Mr. Jones ter make his try, and Jefferson grinned from ear to ear, or a little funder.

He looked at ther pole and ther pole seemed ter stiffen up and flirt etself in ther breeze as ef defyin' him ter come on. I couldn't see ther top ov ther pole ter save my life. Ther ground had taken on a gently rollin' moshun, like a ship on a long, lazy sea, and things was deceivin'.

Et was that lush at ther tap ov ther bar'l, I opine.

"Go et, Jeff!" hollerer ther crowd!

"Climb ther slick!"

"Dig in yer toes!"

"Show us what a coon kin do!"

"You are good fer et, you bet ye are!"

Them, and about a thousand other yaups, to encourage him.

Ther nig walked as ef ter pick out a easy side ter tackle, but one side wuz jest as easy as all ther rest, 'parently—ter slide down.

"Wull, heah goes fer et!" ther coon hollerer, and he rund up and grabbed around ther pole as ef et wuz his best girl that he wanted

to hug. And he did hug, you bet he did, and purty soon ther sweat was pourin' off his face.

Et was soon hard ter tell which was ther most shiny, ther coon or ther pole. Jeff hugged fer all he was worth, tryin' ter climb et, but, bless yer life, he couldn't git a foot clear av ther ground ter save his soul. He was game all ther same; he didn't give up till ther feller in charge hollerer time, and then he fell back with a dry grin.

"Golly!" he said, "dat am pow'ful stiff clim'; hit am fo' shual!"

All he had done was to wipe off some ov ther grease fer ther next feller, and the next feller, as I said, was ther Swede.

"Now, Nels, hump yourself!" somebody hollerer.

"Make a run an' a yump, and grab on half-way up ther thing!" some other feller whooped up.

"Yas, Aa'm a-goin' to maak a try at it, anyhow," ther Swede declared, as he rubbed his hands together and got ready. "Aa'm yackass enough fer anything, yust to maak fun!"

Wull, he took holt whar ther nig left off, and bein' fresh, he did git up a foot or two, but when he struck new grease he began ter backslide in a way that would have struck terror to ther heart ov any other kind ov a congregashun but ther one that was assembled thar.

"Go et, Swede!"

"Git thar, Nels!"

"Hang on with yer ha'r!"

"Grip fast with yer teeth!"

"Anyhow er tall ter git thar, no matter!"

"Lick et off with yer tongue as ye work yer way along!"

Only a sample of ther million or two ov complymints that wur showered at him while he was makin' his try.

But, et was no use. When ther time was up, thar was Nels still wormin' at that pole and tryin' ter reach a foot higher than he could git, but he had ter drop and take a back seat.

Et was ther same with ther three or four others before et kem to my pard, though one ov 'em did make a purty decent effort to do somethin', and got up a couple ov yards, mebbly.

"Now, then, Cross Cricker!" hollerer ther throng.

"I'm right here, you bet!" bellerer You-bet, steppin' out.

"Think ov that fifty, Bob," I encouraged.

"Et all 'pends on you, so do yer little best."

"You mind my clothes and money, Cy," he retorted, turnin' to me. I could see his eyes wuz beginnin' ter swim onsteady, thanks ter that bar'l in ther suller, no doubt.

"Shur," said I.

"And I'll look out fer this," said Bob.

Ther crowd was yellin' like mad, now, and Bob stepped up and tackled et.

I wuz hopin' that he would reach ther top, but all ther same I knowed he wouldn't—knowed he couldn't do et nohow.

Bob hooked on.

"Give him a ladder!" some fellow hollerer.

"Give him a fair show, wull ye?" I sassed back at him.

"A show! Great Scott! he has got ther hull world with a stick in et!"

"Then don't stick in your lip besides, my friend," I bellerer, and I wobbled a step in his direction.

"Mebby you think you kin make me keep my lip out," sez ther feller.

"And mebbly I kin do et, too," said I, lookin' war-like.

Et might ov kem to a scrap, but Bob let go his holt and turned around to me and hollers like mad:

"See hyer, Cy, you have got enough ter do to mind my store clothes; you leave ther

rest ov et to me. I will 'tend to him when I git done here, so he'll wish his grammother was his uncle."

"All right, ef you say so, pard," said I, and I settled down in my bones again, fer ther ear'n was gittin' rocky, I'm tellin' ye. I wusht that I had left that bar'l alone.

Wull, my pard tried and he tried, and he puffed and snorted and swore, but et wasn't no sort ov use. He did git up furdern any other feller yet, but he didn't git to ther top, which was clear out ov sight, both figgery and litterly, fur as I was concerned at any rate, He had ter give et up.

CHAPTER XV.

HORRIBLE DISCOVERY.

Et looked as ef that fifty dollars was safe.

I mean, that et was safe to ther man what had put et up, which was ther landlord ov ther Grand Central.

Ther next fool in ther batch was ther sure-enough fool, Silly Gilly, and thur was a reg'lar hooray when he kem up to ther pole fer his try. He looked ther yahoo that he was.

"Bob," said I, "ye didn't git thar."

"Wull, ye needn't fling et in my face," he grumbles.

"I ain't a flingin'," said I, "I'm only sorry fer that fifty."

"Ther Old Scratch himself couldn't climb that 'ar pole," You-bet asseverated, scowlin'-like.

"Mebby ther fool will do et," I opined.

"Him?" with a snort.

"He won ther race," I minded him.

"Wull, he has got somethin' else ter do now," informed Bob. "He ain't in a bag ter turn sumblets now. Come, let's go change, and try that bar'l ergain; I am dry, after that."

"No, we must see ther fun out first," I told him, and I stuck to.

We sort ov leaned together, to stand straight, fer things wuz beginnin' to go round some, and we fell to watchin' ther antics ov that fool.

Ther crowd was whoopin' and yellin' and makin' all sorts ov fun ov him, fer he didn't seem ter make any more ov a go ov et than ther nig had done in ther fu'st place, but he didn't mind et.

"Spit on yer hands," some one told him.

"Take off yer shoes," some one else kindly advised him.

He had on a pair ov reg'lar hobnail gaiters that looked like cut-down stogies.

"Grip fast with yer chin!" hollered my pard.

"Why didn't you do that?" some feller bellered at my pard.

"Hook on with yer nose!" some one else yauped out.

"Take fast with yer eyewinks!"

"Make use ov yer ears!"

"Crook yer neck!"

"Hump yer back!"

"Bend yer shins!"

"Dig in yer elbows!"

And about forty billyun other things wuz said, none ov which seemed ter help ther case a bit.

Ov a sudden that feller stopped short. He took a long breath, linked his fingers together on ther other side ov ther pole, and he brought them 'ar shoes ov his'n into play.

Would ye believe et! He stiffened out them 'ar legs of his'n, pullin' hard on his arms, legs and arms almost touchin', and he walked up that 'ar pole almost like a fly would walked up ther side of ther house! Fact, sure as I'm a livin' llar!

On ther top ov ther pole was a bottle ov whisk, tied thar with a string, and ther feller what climbed et got that, too. I didn't know et was thar till my pard told me, and then I knowed why he had almost killed himself to git to ther top. Ther fool looked

ter me no bigger'n a fly, up thar, and I couldn't see ther pole er tall—et was endless tall.

"Bob, kin ye see him?" I quired.

"No, but I see ther bottle," said Bob.

"What bottle?" said I, and et was then he told me. Hearin' that, I strained my eyes to ther utmost, and I made et out.

Thar was ther fool, with one arm linked over ther top ov ther pole and his legs twisted around et, and he had his head back and ther bottle to his mouth like he was a baby takin' pap.

"Ther darn fool will drink et all!" I had to yelp out.

"Jest like a fool," grumbled Bob. But he whispered:

"No matter, Cy; we know whar et grows."

"You bet," said I—"whar it bubbles and gurgles."

But, the fool didn't drink et all; he put in ther stopper and hollered:

"Ketch!"

Glory! I thought ther hull popylation ov ther hull earth had come together in one grand collision!

Thar was a rush; every man jack in ther crowd hollered "Mel" and et was a matter ov life and death in a fraction ov a second. And in ther midst ov et all down kem ther bottle!

Et took ther Swede plump on ther top ov his sconce, and I tell you et more'n made him "yump!"

Thar was a grand scramble, and a free fight, forthwith.

Me and Bob stood embracin', fer things was gittin' so rocky about then that we could hardly keep on our pins.

"Bob," I axed him, "ain't et glorious?"

"Et's gittin' so," acceded my pard.

"Let's go back to that bar'l."

"Bob," said I, "et won't do; we'll git cornered, sure as you live, and that will give et away."

"Wull, Cy, you ain't fur from corned now," he testified. "Ef I was as near to et as you are, I would want ter finish ther job right off quick and be done with et."

"And ef I was haff as near to et as you are," retorts I, "I would think I was corned about enough and let et alone as a finished job. Ther fact ov ther business is, you are drunk, and I won't be held 'sponsible fer ye ef you go back to that bar'l."

"Do ye mean ter 'sult me?" hollered Bob.

"Take et that way ef ye want to," bellered I.

"Give me my clothes," said he—"quick!"

"Take 'em," said I, jest as quick.

I heaved ther togs at him, and scoopin' 'em as he best could he went zigzaggin' to'rds ther hotel, me follerin'.

"Don't lose yer money, Bob," I called out loud at him.

"Never mind mine, you look out fer yourn," he jest shouted back at me.

"That pole made ye dizzy, didn't et?" I asked him.

"And lookin' at et made you so," he answered me.

Meantime—thar hadn't been much—ther fight over that bottle was goin' on red-hot, and nobody noticed me and Bob and we got to ther sullen again all right and shut ther door.

Bob was goin' straight fer that bar'l, but I hooked onto him and held him back.

"Bob," said I, "git your clothes on first."

"What fur?" he asked, a wonderin'.

"You'll never git 'em on afterwards," I explained.

By hangin' on to him I 'suaded him to do that, and he got dressed.

"Now fer a finisher!" he ejaculates, soon's he had his right clothes on. "I don't mean to let go till I'm full!"

"You will let go when I think you have enough," said I, "if I have to kick holes in

ye to make ye let go. You don't want to fergit that thar are two of us to be filled."

We could see purty well by that time, and by holdin' fast to each other we managed to keep ther sullen floor from bulgin' high enough to knock our brains out against ther beams overhead, though et seemed ter be rockin' like a yearthquake all ther time.

We got to ther bar'l and thar Bob let go ov me and took ther bar'l into his fond embrace.

He had trouble gettin' down, fer ther bar'l bobbed up and knocked his brains out two or three times 'fore he got ther business end of ther thing to his mouth.

"'Urn 'er on," he gurgled to me, then.

"On she goes," and I guv ther thing a turn and leaned back.

"'Urn 'er on, 'urn 'er on!" sputtered Bob, with ther thing in his mouth.

"Et is turned on," I answered him. "Are you so blame drunk that you don't know et?"

"I say ain't 'urned on," said Bob. "'Urn 'er on! You needn't think you kin fool me," he bellered, lettin' go his hold to say et, and I leaned over to look and see.

Sure enough, et wasn't turned on, but off. I guv et another turn, lookin' ter see ther flood that would pour out all over my pard's head, fer I turned et cl'ar on, but thar wasn't no flood. Then a thought hit me so hard that ther sullen stood still ther same instant. I looked, I felt; sure enough, we had left et leakin' before, and ther hull bar'l ov light-nin' was gone!

Me and Bob was out in the cold

CHAPTER XVI.

ME AND BOB GIT NIGH HUNG.

"'Urn et on, 'urn et on!" my pard kept a-hollerin', and he was gittin' spotted 'cause ther juice didn't flow.

"Bob," said I, wantin' to break ther news to him gentle-like, "et has been turned on a good while. Ther fact ov ther business is, we left et turned on when we quit before."

"Durnashun!" and Bob got up, quick.

"Ther bar'l is empty," I explained.

"You are right, so et is," said he, liftin' it easy.

"Who is yer undertaker?" I asked him.

"Why do ye say that?" he demanded for to know.

"You will need him," said I, significantly.

"What fer?" said he, as if a-wonderin' whar his wits war at.

"Samson will kill ye," I notified him.

"Well, you will be in et too, anyhow," said he.

That was ther trouble; what I wanted was to git out ov it if I could.

"Et was you coaxed me on," I asserted.

"I wouldn't thought ov such a thing ef et hadn't been fer you."

"You are a liar," he yowled, jest as plain as that. "That was ther excuse Adam made when he e't ther apple, but et didn't work. He didn't need no coaxin' and neither did you."

"That wasn't a bar'l ov whisk," I jist reminded him.

"Et was on ther same principle," said he; "et was a apple."

"Well," said I, "what are we goin' to do about et?"

"I'm awfully sorry et's wasted," said he.

"I wush I had more ov et inside, then et wouldn't worry me a bit."

"Ther landlord will kill us deader'n mackerel," I opined. "I wush I could find a hole to crawl into, and blame me ef I wouldn't pull ther hole in after me."

"No use whinin'; jest keep a stiff upper lip," Bob advised.

"That's right," said I.

Et was remarkable how that 'maginary earthquake had subsided in sech a short time.

Ther floor of ther sullen wasn't more'n half as roly as et had been before, and we found

ther stairs without knockin' our brains out more'n three or four times apiece.

"What are ye goin' to say to him?" I axed.

"We won't say nothin' less he finds et out, then he will do all ther sayin' himself."

"I can't look him in ther eyes," I declared.

"You couldn't do et anyhow, gimble as you are in ther knees," asserted Bob.

Mebby he was right, and right thar laid another danger: Mebby ther landlord would notice et and tumble to ther racket.

We couldn't stay thar, however, so we went up ther steps and out into ther bar-room where ther crowd was jest assemblin' to help Silly Gilly liquidate his prize.

Ther poor fool hadn't even been allowed ter have ther money in his own hands. Ther committee showed et to him, but that was all, and hustled him off to treat ther multytoods on his good fortune. Et was rather rough on Gilly, as I said to my pard.

It looked as if ther hull camp was crowded into that bar-room, and so we wasn't noticed.

We could 'a' got out, got our ponies, and out ov ther town ef it hadn't been fer Bob, but he felt jest good enough to be reckless.

"Count us in that, too!" he hollered out. "I have got a dollar in that thar fund, and I'll as leev take et out in trade as not. Come along, Cy, squeeze up to ther rack somewhere!"

He led ther way, and I follered to see that he had a fair showin' fer his money.

His money! Not even ther ring ov et was his.

Samson behind ther bar was as busy as he could be, handin' out his jag-juice, but ov a sudden he hollered:

"Here, you Bill!" to his handy man. "Take this measure and go down sullen and draw et full, double quick! Don't be a minute about et, fer ther gentlemen are waitin'!"

He flung a big copper measure over ther heads ov ther throng, and his man caught et and started fur ther sullen.

I looked at Bob, Bob looked at me.

"What now?" said I.

"Circus," said he.

And et hit me hard that he was more'n haff right.

"Hadn't we better slope?" I asked him.

"Better limber our necks fer hangin'," said he.

"We'll have to lie," said I.

"We'll have ter lay," said he.

"What d'ye mean?" I asked him.

"Don't you know et's a sin ter lie?" said he. "What did that feller say this mornin'?"

"We'll have ter lay—lay low." "I'd like ter lay him!" I snarled, when I thought ov et all. "Ef et hadn't been fer him we wouldn't be in this fix now. But, we had better have business some'ers else."

It was too late.

Jest at that minute thar kem a sound from ther regions below.

At first et was a low growl, then next a rumble, and immijitly follerin' that et was a reg'lar thunder.

I felt pale all over.

Up kem that feller, his measure empty, and his eyes wur open like two sassers.

"Ther stuff is gone!" he yowled. "Ther bar'l is empty, and thar ain't no likker to be had! Somebody has turned ther spiggy and let ther juice all run out on ther floor!"

That landlord turned as pale as ary ghost. "Empty?" he screamed, showin' white in the gills.

"Bone dry," said ther man; "not a smell here."

Et was jest what I looked fer; his eyes turned right onto me and Bob.

"Did you fellers do that?" he roared. "Did ye? By ther glitterin' moon ov night, ef yedid ye will hang as high as Hangman!" I think that was ther name he guv.

"Do ye think we are hogs?" asked Bob, a bristlin' up.

"That's ther question," I backed him up, though I was at ther time tremblin' so at ther knees that I could hardly stand.

"Did yer do et?" ther landlord 'sisted, ugly as a rattler.

"Do yer think a citerzen ov Cross Crick, all in good and reg'lar standin', would be guilty ov sich a haynous crime?" asked Bob, with dignity.

"That's right!" I backed him, my very despurashun makin' me say somethin' to keep my heart from stoppin'. "Did you ever hear ov a citerzen ov Cross Crick wastin' good whisk?"

"Did you touch that bar'l?" howled ther landlord.

"No need ter ask 'em," hollered some feller. "See how ther eyes is swimmin'; ain't that enough?"

Et was enough.

Samson was over that bar in a bound, and he lighted right onto me and my pard, like a hog on the sassage peddler.

Ther very wust that I had antissypated then kem to pass. He lifted 'us both clear ov ther floor and banged our heads together till he beat our brains out then and thar.

"A pair of dead beats!" he yelped.

"Hang 'em!" roared the crowd.

"They will be past et, when I git done," he preached.

I believed him; his corrugated countenance was convincin'.

You never in all your born days seen a madder crowd 'n what that was.

Ef we had been double-dyed hoss-thieves, they couldn't used us wuss 'n what they did, you bet.

Ther crime we had done was somethin' that nothin' could atone fur. It was a holiday, and thar was a hull brand-new bar'l ov whisk' let to run to waste—only think ov ther magnytod ov our 'fensel!

Wull, when ther landlerd got done with us he heaved us into a corner, limp as two dish-clouts, and then ther crowd took us in hand. They had got ropes, in ther mean time, and they dragged us out by ther bootstraps, bumpin' our heads down ther steps regardless. They meant business, thar was no doubt about et, and I said my little pray'r as I rode along on my back!

CHAPTER XVII.

THEIR NEXT GAME ENTERED.

We would been hanged, jest as sure as sunset, if et hadn't been fer that nat'ral born yahoo, Silly Gilly!

When we had been dragged about half-way to ther nearest tree, that loonytick kem runnin' up on his burro, yellin' wuss'n ary wild Injun you ever heard tell ov in your born days.

"They didn't do et!" was ther burden ov his song. "They didn't do et! they didn't do et!"

"Yas they did, too!" bellered ther ring-leader ov our captors.

"No they didn't! no they didn't!" he kept repeating.

And that burro took to kickin' in a way that made every man ov 'em dodge fer his life, and ther fool couldn't no more hold et down than nothin'.

They had ter drop us and back off, and when they had done that, ther burro sort o' quieted down and rubbed his nose around as ef ter see what damage had been done.

"What d'ye mean by runnin' that lump o' jumpin' dynamite in byer?" yowled ther ringleader, madder'n a porcupine defendin' its young.

"How could I help et?" piped up ther fool. "Tobias ain't a kitten."

"No, ye are right he ain't. But, what d'ye mean by sayin' these two cut-throats from Cross Crick is innercent?"

"Cause, I seen another man sneak out ov that sullen when I was on ther pole," answered ther fool. "I could look right down

in over ther doors, ye know, and et wasn't these men."

Me'n Bob never knowed whether he lied or told ther truth, the delightful.

We s'pected that he lied, after what follered later on, ter show his good will to us fer savin' him his dinner, but we don't know et, fer shure.

Ther fact ov ther matter was, he 'peared too tarnel much ov a fool to invent ther story, and yet he wasn't sech a fool that he couldn't— But, hold on! No use tellin' till ther time comes.

Wull, thar was a big pow-wow, as ter whether we should be hanged or not, and Bob was interested in et, you bet!

Thar we wuz, ther ropes already 'round our necks.

Et must 'a' been a hard temptation fer ther citizens ov Hold-up ter resist, seein' that it was a holiday and that a hangin' would be one ov ther greatest ov events.

Bob made a big speech in our behalf after which I follered with a few ramb lin' remarks to ther effect that ef we had poured out that likker in that manner we deserved wuss'n hangin'; we deserved bein' shut up fer life as ther plumbgonest loonyticks that ever infester'd ther earth.

Ther upshot ov et all wuz, we wuz let ter go free, and I tell ye we could walk considerable straight, by that time.

"Gentlemen," said my pard, about then, "et is our treat."

That turned ther balance, jest bet your socks!

I wasn't a bit slow in takin' ther hint, you may rely, and I follered suit, ter wit:

"Yes, et's our treat. Come right erlong, boys, and ef we can't find one thing we'll try and give ye another. We must drink to ther health ov Silly Gilly, ther butt ov ther buttes! but a fool with a head on 'im, as I'll orate all day!"

Ye see, we had heard ther general lamentashun throughout ther town that thar was no more drink to be had. All ther smaller places had run out long before, and that bar'l was one that Samson had laid in only a little while before in order to have a Thanksgivin' cinch that would come in at the end and rake the jack-pot.

No wonder he was mad!

"What will ye treat us with?" one feller demanded.

"Anything that's to be had," Bob asserted like a law-breeder.

"Thar ain't nothin' to be had, though."

"Then we'll take water," said I.

"D'ye want ter give us ther colic?" another feller bellered.

"Under ther circumstances, we can't treat, then," explained Bob. "But wait till ye come over to Cross Crick!"

Et looked as if ther fun fer that day was done; but et wasn't, though et was a strict Prohibition town fer ther rest ov ther day. Not a smell ov juice was ter be had fer love or money.

As fer Samson, he was in sackcloth and ashes, speakin' figgery.

Ther next thing on ther programme was a tub-race in ther crick, not a long ways from ther camp center, and as thar was nothin' left in town to hold the crowd thar, everybody went out to see the race.

"Cy," said my pard, "shall we enter?"

"You kin ef you want to," said I; "you seem ekal to it."

"I climbed ther pole," he reminded.

"No, I be blamed ef you did!" said I, obstinate-like.

"Well, I made a try at et, anyhow," said he.

"Then make a try at this," I sicked him on.

"Et's your turn," said he, meaning me.

"I'm afraid ov gettin' my store clothes wet," I objected.

"And yer money, I s'pose."

"Jes' so," said I.

"Ef that is all, I kin hold that fer ye," said he.

"And you won't pay ther landlord, either?" said I.

"Nary!" and then we both had to laff.

All ther same we 'quired what ther prize fer ther race was ter be, and we learned to our amaze that et was a quart ov whisk'.

Glory! my pard was out ov his coat in two winks, same as about a hundred more, and as thar wasn't but about twenty tubs et was a scramble to see who would git them.

Et was even so; a quart ov whisk' had been laid by on purpose fer that, and it was tied to a stake about a hundred yards up ther crick between ther walls ov ther little canyon out ov which ther crick run, and thar et was, safe and sound, when et was p'inted out.

Thar wasn't but twenty tubs, as I said, and it looked as if thar wuz as many men fightin' fer each tub.

I must tell ye that ther prize was a hard one ter win. Ther crick, 'tween ther rocks, was narrer, deep and swift, and it looked as if that prize was safe, far as reachin' et in a tub was concerned.

And thar was no way to reach et 'cept by ther water. Ther bottle had been put thar by a feller in a boat, about ther only way possible.

Well, that fight was a hot one, now I'm tellin' ye.

In about twenty seconds ther bottoms had been knocked out ov haff ther tubs, in ther melee, and et didn't take but about as many seconds more to finish ther rest ov 'em in ther same way.

Ther race was off.

But, thar was that temptin' bottle of wake-em-up the only remainin' drop in that hull town!

It wouldn't 'a' made haff ther 'citement ef et had been a bottle ov yaller dust, you kin bet your life. Why, ther galoots ov Hold-up fairly went wild to git et, and my pard was about ther wildest, so I jedged.

"Swim fer et, You-bet, swim fer et!" I hollered out to him, like the preacher at South Platte when his wife was baptized and got drowned.

"Bet yer life we'll swim fer et!" ther hull blame crowd hollered to oncet, and off they splashed.

Ov all ther fun you ever seen in all yer born days! No sooner would one feller git a little ahead than all ther rest would pull him back and poke him under ther water.

I don't know as any was drowned, but et was a miracle they wasn't.

Up ther crick they went, in a slow, straight line, as fast as they could fight to ther front, and et was a case of which one had ther most wind and grit.

But, what would be ther use? Ef they got ther bottle they would only spill et fightin' fer et, and they wouldn't git a smell fer all ther trouble. True, et might flavor ther water ov ther crick a trifle, but only enough to make et aggravatin'.

But, on they went, as I said, crazy as bed-bugs to git that last quart of booze, and a-howlin' wuss'n ary pack ov demons yer imagination kin kunjur up or down.

Purty soon thar was pullin' ov another kind.

Durn me ef thar didn't go that blame yahoo, Silly Gilly, ther howlin' ljjit of ther buttes, straight up ther bank on that thar burro of his'n!

They knowed what he was goin' to do, the minute they 'spied him, and the yell that went up was deafenin'. But, that didn't stop Silly, not a bit et didn't; he went right on, all same as if he war a Chinaman after a man who hadn't paid his washee.

When he had rode as fur as he could, which was past ther crowd, by a good deal, he turned that burro into ther water and ther critter went swimmin' like ary rat, straight fer ther stick to which that bottle

was tied, and ther crowd was so bitin' mad that they began fer ter shoot.

Ther bullets spattered around that fool like rain, almost, and I don't see how et was he uasn't killed ten times over, but he seemed ter be charmed, and not a blame one ov 'em touched him. He went straight on, not so much as dodgin', and when he got to ther stick he took off ther bottle, same as he had ther one from ther pole, and took a drink to ther health ov ther crowd!

CHAPTER XVIII.

A FOOL FER LUCK.

A Madder crowd you never seen.

They fired their last shots in one big volley, but still ther fool wasn't touched.

Ef he had come back that way I reckon he would 'a' been hanged, but he didn't do that; when he had took his drink he went on up ther crick, and that was ther last seen ov him, fer some time. He war the fool that didn't get fooled.

That closed ther sport ov ther day, barrin' the weddin' in the evenin'.

When that crowd got out ov ther crick and straggled to ther town center, et looked as if thar had been a wholesale baptizin'. And et was observable that a good many ov 'em walked straighter 'n they had walked before.

Well, it was growin' night, and as ther earth had stopped in a measure its heavin' and rollin', me and Bob was gettin' some hungry.

"Bob," I requested, "what's fer supper?"

"A bullet, ef we go near that hotel," my pard notified.

"But, I'm hungry," I had to insist.

"Me, too," said he; "awful empty."

We thought et over, and purty soon we hit onto a plan that we thought might work.

We went on a run fer ther hotel, hard as ever we could go, Bob ahead and me not fur behind him, and me a-yellin' at the top ov my lungs.

Into ther shebang went Bob, and he slammed right up to ther bar and hollered out that he wanted to pay his bill—our bills, ruther—'fore I could git thar, and wanted to know how much.

He was in dead earnest, to all 'pearances.

Ther landlord was recknin' up ther sum, and Bob jammed his hand into his pocket, all wet as he was, and thar his hand stuck.

He tried ter pull et out, swearin' hard all ther while, and while he was in that fix I rushed in, still hollerin', and I told ther landlord not to take a cent of his money.

Then we had a scene sim'lar to t'other one, and with guns drawn on each other we marched in to supper, tellin' that landlord to charge et up to us, and each one promisin' that he would pay, even if he had to kill t'other in order to git a chance.

So, we got our supper, but when we kem out that landlord was layin' for us. He colared us, 'fore we had any chance to git out our guns, and there and then he knocked our brains out some more and otherwise maltreated and maimed us. When he got done with us we had that tired feelin' mighty bad. And incidentally he had let out that he was on to our game.

Somehow he had found out that we had been robbed by ther same road-agent that had robbed Silly Gilly ov his wealth, and I tell you he took et out ov our hides with all due interest. He was big enough ter do et, takin' us unawares like he did, and we had ter grin and bear et. But, when he flung us out through a side winder, one after t'other, that was ther last straw—et like to broke our backs.

"Bob," I orated, "let's go home."

"I am willin', Cy," said he.

"Ef you go you will walk," said ther landlord from ther winder. "I will hold onto them ponies ov yourn."

I looked at Bob, he looked at me, and we

both shook our heads in a sorry way. Ther crowd was laffin' wild, and we got up out ov that and started in ther direction ov Cross Crick afoot.

When we got to ther head ov ther gulch, though, who should we meet but that fool Gilly, and he stopped us. He had some of that stuff in ther bottle left, and he guv us a lick at et. We applied et to our hurt feelin's—applied et inwardly, I mean, and felt better—inward and outward.

"But, whar are ye goin'?" we asked him.

"Ef ye go back thar they will hang ye."

"I'm goin' fer them four dollars ov mine," said he.

We wuz surprised, forthwith.

"I have got onto him," said Gilly. "I thought et was him, and now I know et. He has jest been to ther place where he had his wealth hid, to git somethin', and now he has gone back."

"Who is he?" we asked, sort ov fevery.

"Come on back and see," said ther fool, and dyin' ov curiosity we went with him.

When we got back to ther camp center ther weddin' ov the mine manager's darter wuz just on, and ther crowd was standin' in front ov ther manager's house to see ther knot tied.

Et was takin' place on ther peeazzy, 'cordin' to programme, and thar was that dude I have mentioned before, as slick as a feather in his dress suit and kid gloves, lookin' as if he had jest been handed down from a Chris'mus tree; and ther bride was still purtier.

A preacher was on hand, and when he asked in sollum voice if anybody had anything to say 'gin' that union, up piped ther yahoo.

"Yes, I have!" he hollered, right thar.

Forthwith, then, he prances that thar burro straight up to ther peeazzy and right onto ther top, sendin' ther wimmen into fits, almost. And that dude, 'his face was like chawk.

"What do you mean, fool?" squawked ther mine manager.

"I mean that that feller is ther paper-bag road-agent!" chinned ther fool. "He has got my four dollars! And the money of the Cross Crick boys—that's what!"

"Surr-rr rr-rah!" chattered ther dude, stiffenin' up till he looked like a man made ov candy. "What do you m-m-mean?"

"I mean my four dollars," respired ther fool, coverin' him with ther wust-lookin' old gun you ever seen in your life. "You can't lie out ov et, either!"

And then, straightway, ther fool ov ther buttes told his story, too long to be retold hyer, and ther dead wood was on that feller so hard that he couldn't git out ov et nohow.

He was 'rested, then and thar; ther weddin' was off, and a committee was 'p'inted to go to ther place ther fool said and see ef et was as he said. Me and Bob was on that committee, you bet, lookin' fer our wads, and you kin kick me fer a galoot ef we didn't git 'em!—every durn pistareen.

Ye see, that fool had taken closter survey ov ther feller than we had, and had noticed sartain marks on his hands, and keepin' his eyes peeled, had found him out in ther fine dude that was to have married ther purty gal. Oh, didn't that make a jubilee! Bet your life on that! and ther mayor ov ther camp had all he could do ter keep ther crowd from havin' a hangin'-bee after all. As fer me and Bob, we got our ponies in ther 'citement and sloped fer home. We still owe that landlord, though we mean to settle some time—when we git ready—in a way ov our own. It'll be his treat when we do!

And so ends ther yarn that I set out ter spin. Thar is Old Noah Web, still in ther corner whar I flung him, and I leave et to the reader ef I haven't done a purty good lick without him.

THE END.

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